

I.L. ANDREYEV

# ENGELS'S

'THE ORIGIN  
OF THE FAMILY,  
PRIVATE PROPERTY  
AND THE STATE'



PROGRESS PUBLISHERS

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PROGRESS PUBLISHERS  
MOSCOW

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Printed in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

A 0102010000-298 4 - 85  
014(01)-85

'I hope that in studying this question of the state you will acquaint yourselves with Engels' book 'The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State'. This is one of the fundamental works of modern socialism, every sentence of which can be accepted with confidence, in the assurance that it has not been said at random but is based on immense historical and political material.'<sup>1</sup>

## INTRODUCTION

*The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* by Frederick Engels occupies a special place in Marxist literature on the theory of the historical process.

Marx and Engels analysed one of the most urgent issues of their day—that of the essence of the capitalist socio-economic formation. They defined the basic strategy and tactics to be used by the proletariat in the struggle for socialist revolution, and indicated the main principles of the future communist society. Material on the ancient history of mankind was used in their works up to the 1870s mainly to describe individual processes or phenomena in the pre-history of their contemporary society. We also know, however, that for many years Marx was preparing to write a major work devoted to the disintegration of tribal society and the rise of antagonistic class society.

By the end of the 1870s, anthropology had gathered a wealth of new information concerning both peoples who were still living at one or other stage of primi-

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, 'The State', *Collected Works*, Vol. 29, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1977, p. 473.

tive-communal society, and primitive institutions still surviving in countries where capitalism had already appeared (Germany, Russia, etc.), but had not yet attained the highest level to be found at that time. This may explain why, in the last years of his life, Marx devoted considerable time to making notes on such works as *Communal Agriculture, the Causes, Course and Consequences of Its Decline* by the Russian sociologist M. M. Kovalevsky, *Ancient Society* by Lewis Morgan, and many others. Simultaneously Engels wrote some sections for a book on the history of Germany, which dealt with the ancient and early medieval periods.<sup>1</sup>

Shortly after the death of Marx, Engels used the detailed notes which Marx had made on Morgan as the basis for his work *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, which he wrote between March and May, 1884, and whose publication he saw as the fulfilment of a bequest by his friend. In this work, Engels systematically sets forth the stages in the development of ancient human society from a dialectical-materialist position.

*The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* revealed not only Engels' concern to complete certain theoretical works which Marx had left unfinished (above all, *Capital*), but also his desire to do all in his power to carry through the work Marx had planned. Judging by the detailed extracts Marx made from *Ancient Society*, he had intended to present his readers with a history of primitive society, with a dialectical-materialist interpretation of the scientific results of Morgan's work.

This work by Engels was of enormous significance for the further development and theoretical substantiation of Marxism. His summation and critical inter-

pretation of new anthropological data on primitive society, and above all of the works of Morgan, enabled Engels to draw major theoretical and political conclusions. In this book, he elucidated, on the basis of concrete material, the concept of world history as developed by himself and Marx. He also refuted more convincingly than ever many dogmas of bourgeois science, particularly those concerning the primeval nature of the patriarchal family, of private property, state power, social inequality, exploitation, oppression, etc.

This book by Engels contains a dialectical-materialist explanation of the early history of mankind, together with a detailed description of the economic prerequisites and historical conditions necessary for the emergence of private property and the state, and of the related evolution of the forms of marriage and the family.

Engels revealed the economic basis and demonstrated the historically transient nature of private property, classes and the state. These propositions played, and continue to play, an important role in the struggle waged by Marxism against bourgeois, opportunist and anarchist ideologies. In his speeches and writings, Lenin often referred to this work by Engels.

In *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, Engels examined in detail the essence of the gens as discovered by Morgan, and contributed considerably to the elucidation and specification of concepts relating to Marx's theory of the historical process. This is very important for modern science, in relation, for example, to such concepts as 'gens' and 'tribe'. Morgan revealed the significance of the gens as the basic unit of primitive-communal society, thus laying the foundations for a scientific study of the history of primitive society. In its notes to the manuscript *Outlines of Political Economy (Rough Draft 1857-1858)* by Marx, the Institute of Marxism-Lenin-

<sup>1</sup> See Friedrich Engels, 'Zur Urgeschichte der Deutschen', in: Marx, Engels, Werke, Bd. 19, Dietz Verlag, Berlin, 1962, S. 425-520.

ism of the CPSU Central Committee wrote: 'The term "Stamm" had, in the historical science of the mid-nineteenth century, a much wider meaning than it has today. It referred to all those people who shared a common ancestor and covered the modern concepts of "gens" and "tribe". Lewis Morgan was the first to clearly define and distinguish between these two concepts in his book *Ancient Society* (1877). Summarising the results obtained by Morgan, Engels provided a comprehensive analysis of the content of these concepts.'<sup>1</sup>

The contribution made by Engels to the still young branch of science—ethnology—helped scientists to perceive the essence and trace the historical development of the community, the most widespread form of peasant association at that time. Its starting point was the gentile or, as he called it in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, the 'communist household' community. It was precisely this community which functioned as the economic unit that arose naturally on the basis of kinship. The gradual transformation of these blood relations turned the community into a federation of small-scale farmers—individual owners of land and other means of production. The community developed in the direction of parcel-communal relations. On the basis of the community it is possible to observe the intensive process of property differentiation among direct producers, and the division of society into classes.

In the overwhelming majority of newly-independent countries, tribal and patriarchal-communal relations still constitute the core of social relations for a considerable section of the population. This is particularly true of the peasantry whose numbers, despite the accelerating process of industrialisation and urbanisation, are still increasing and will, according to UN estimates, reach almost three thousand million people

<sup>1</sup> Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Works*, Second Russian Edition, Vol. 46, Part I, p. 537.

by the turn of the century. Therefore, if progressive socio-economic changes in socialist-orientated countries are to be successful, they must take into account the patterns of development of pre-capitalist forms of economy and social relations.

In Africa, for example, marital-family relations are still often based on pre-monogamous traditions of the pairing or the large, patriarchal (sometimes matriarchal) family, on polygamy, etc. In many regions of the continent private ownership of the means of production, and, in particular, of land, has still not emerged. Political institutions, modern in form, have sometimes not managed to go beyond concepts of tribal solidarity or ethno-tribal community (a confederation of related tribes). In pursuing their neo-colonialist policy, imperialist forces working through conservative circles frequently make use of this fact in order to create 'pocket' tribal 'political' parties with a view to fomenting separatism and tribalism and thereby undermining the social and territorial integrity of the young states.

Tribal relations also play a vital and varied role in other continents. In Asia, for example, in modern Afghanistan, tribes often serve not only as a traditional means of uniting the local population, but also as the subject of direct political action. The traditional council of elders—the *jirga*—decides upon important social issues.

All of this shows that *The Origin of the Family* by Engels is still relevant today both from a methodological point of view, and also in terms of its content. Its basic propositions and conclusions relate to major socio-political issues affecting the lives of hundreds of millions of people. For this reason *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* should be studied by ideological workers and activists of the revolutionary-democratic parties in socialist-orientated countries, and by all revolutionaries in newly-independent countries. The task is not an easy one, as this

book by Engels is fairly complex and contains a wealth of scientific material. The same task once faced the revolutionary vanguard of the workers and peasants of Russia, as Lenin once pointed out. Delivering a lecture on the state at the Sverdlov Communist University in 1919, Lenin said: 'Undoubtedly, not all the parts of this work have been expounded in an equally popular and comprehensible way; some of them presume a reader who already possesses a certain knowledge of history and economics. But I again repeat that you should not be perturbed if on reading this work you do not understand it at once. Very few people do. But returning to it later, when your interest has been aroused, you will succeed in understanding the greater part, if not the whole of it.'<sup>1</sup>

## L MARX, ENGELS AND MORGAN ON ANCIENT SOCIETY

The founders of scientific communism, like the 'father of ethnography', Lewis Morgan, accorded prime importance to a study of the primitive forms of social life. Moreover, they began their investigations into the problems of the development of primitive society almost simultaneously: Marx and Engels first raised the question of ancient society in their joint manuscript *The German Ideology*, written in 1845-1846, and in 1847 Morgan began to publish articles which were to compose his first monograph, *The League of the Iroquois*, published in 1851.

However, in their investigation of questions relating to primitive society, Morgan and the founders of Marxism differed as to their methodological approach, studying that society as it were from different angles.

Much of the material which Morgan used in his book was collected as a result of direct contacts with the Iroquois Indians living in his native state of New York. It was only later that he undertook special journeys to visit other Indian tribes. In 1840 the 22-year-old Morgan founded a society whose purpose was to attract attention to the sad fate and unique culture of the Indians. Subsequently he exposed a company of land speculators who, with the support of the Senate, had appropriated land by trickery from the Seneca tribe. Having collected petitions in defence of the Indians, Morgan and his friends from the Grand

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, op. cit., p. 473.

Order of the Iroquois appealed to Congress and secured the return of the land. In recognition of his services, Morgan was made a blood-brother of the Seneca tribe of Iroquois in a solemn ceremony in 1846.

Summing up the close links which Morgan had established with the Indians, the well-known French ethnographer Raoul Makarius wrote in the introduction to the first French edition of *Ancient Society*: 'In a student society whose members imitated the customs and rites of the Redskins, he became the moving spirit behind research aimed at deepening knowledge of Indian mores and institutions. Later, as a lawyer, Morgan resolutely defended against white depredations the interests of those whom he considered to be the first Americans. Thus he was naturally led to ethnography; the Indians were part of his world, and their existence raised problems of every kind.'<sup>1</sup>

The underlying concept of Morgan's chief work—the book *Ancient Society*—can be clearly perceived in its structure.

In Part I—'Growth of Intellect Through Invention and Discovery'—Morgan identifies the so-called 'ethnic periods', the three stages of savagery, the three stages of barbarism, and civilisation, which serve as universal criteria of social development from tribal to political organisation. Following this, Morgan devotes a special chapter to the expansion of and qualitative change in the means of subsistence available to men. In the conclusion to Part I, he examines the 'proportions of human progress', and formulates the idea of its acceleration in a geometric progression.

Part II of *Ancient Society* is entitled 'Growth of the Idea of Government'. This is the main section, and the longest, consisting of 15 chapters. Here Morgan be-

gins with an attempt to reconstruct the genesis of tribal organisation on the basis of material gathered by missionaries in Australia (and, as it later turned out, incorrectly interpreted). Then comes his classic description of the structure and *modus operandi* of the Iroquois gens, phratry, tribe and confederacy, together with descriptions of other Indian tribes and an analysis of the structure of Aztec society at the time of Montezuma. This is the most valuable section of the book, taken as authoritative up to this day. On the basis of data on the Red Indians, primarily the Iroquois, Morgan develops his theory of the gens, the phratry, the tribe and the nation (people), of the political system in Greece and Rome, and also of the various forms of social evolution among the peoples of Europe (Scotland, Ireland, and Germans), Asia (the Urals, China, Palestine), Africa, Australia and Oceania.

Part III, entitled 'Growth of the Idea of the Family', contains an analysis of the five successive forms of the family: the consanguine (the theoretical model for this structure was constructed by Morgan on the basis of material from Hawaii, which he received from unreliable sources); the punaluan; the syndyasmian (pairing); the patriarchal and, finally, the modern monogamous family.

Part IV—'Growth of the Idea of Property'—is the shortest and least developed section of the work. It comprises two chapters (about one-twentieth of the volume of the whole work), and is, in effect, simply a comparison of 'three rules of inheritance': inheritance within the framework of the gens; within the family and, finally, inheritance exclusively by children, including the introduction of wills which, in Morgan's opinion, marked the beginning of the pursuit of property, with all the negative consequences that were to follow.

In contrast to Morgan, Marx and Engels investigated primitive society on the basis of the dialectical-materi-

<sup>1</sup> Raoul Makarius, *Guide critique à la lecture de la société archaïque de L. H. Morgan*, Editions Anthropos, Paris, 1971, p. XI.

alist concept of history which they had already elaborated. Marx metaphorically defined that method by which lower forms are investigated via higher forms as the gnoseological principle: 'the anatomy of man is the key to the anatomy of the ape'. Marx and Engels proceeded from the theory of socio-economic formations, which they had formulated primarily on the basis of a study of capitalist society. It is also worth noting that, in 1870, Engels had independently of Morgan identified the gens as the basis of the clan structure in Ireland. However, he did not at that time substantiate or develop this idea.

Morgan was working his way to an understanding of the 'core' of primitive society via the diversity of actual gentile and tribal structures, that is, he began, so to speak, from the 'other end', by summarising the empirical evidence he had scrupulously gathered from all around the world and his personal observations of the life of the Iroquois 'from within' the gentile-tribal organisation. In this particular case, the general and the particular solutions of the problem of primitive society were achieved completely independently.

The *Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* by Engels is a unique synthesis of both above-mentioned methods of investigating the progressive movement of mankind at the early stages of its development. In addition, by writing this book, Engels brought Marx's interest in and attitude to Morgan's theory to the attention of a new generation of Marxists. The overwhelming majority of those who learned of the existence of this work by Morgan did so precisely thanks to the book by Engels. In 1893, for example (after translating the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* into Russian in 1888 and studying *Capital*), the 23-year-old Lenin, who had arrived in St Petersburg, read *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* during the lifetime of its author.

It was just at this time that, in Russia, N. K. Mikhailovsky, a representative of subjective idealism, started his criticism of Marxism. His criticism of the theoretical legacy of the founders of scientific socialism began with the assertion that Marx had studied 'only' West-European capitalism, and had created a theory of development relating 'only' to bourgeois society, and therefore not valid for countries and peoples who had retained pre-capitalist forms of socio-economic relations. As for the early stages of world history, he claimed, it was Morgan who had opened the eyes of Marx and Engels to their essence and laws, and Morgan was not among their followers, did not share their ideas, nor yet support them. Engels, declares Mikhailovsky, enthusiastically seized upon *Ancient Society* by Morgan in order, by means of a commentary upon it in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, to fill up a theoretical 'gap' concerning ancient society in Marx's theory on socio-economic formations and the historically transient nature of social antagonisms.

In 1894 Lenin, who by this time had not only made a profound study of *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* but also translated into Russian the sections which most interested him, wrote his first book, *What the 'Friends of the People' Are and How They Fight the Social-Democrats*, in which he set forth a fundamental critique of Mikhailovsky's position and declared the works of Engels and Morgan to be of great methodological and theoretical significance for the development of historical materialism. He convincingly argued that the Marxist theory of society is of universal historical validity, and revealed the erroneous and un-historical nature of beliefs in the primeval nature of the patriarchal family and the emergence of tribal, and even national, relations out of family relations. The rich empirical material in Morgan's book confirmed the Marxist conclusion concerning the objective differen-

tiation of social relations into material (prime) and ideal (secondary). According to Lenin, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* successfully completed the Marxist theory of the historical process, particularly in regard to pre-capitalist epochs, thereby further substantiating the objective logic of the rise and development of socio-economic formations preceding capitalism.

Prior to the appearance of Morgan's book, Lenin explained, the lack of factual material made it impossible to apply the dialectical-materialist concept of history elaborated by Marx 'to an analysis of certain very important phenomena in ancient European history—for instance, that of gentile organisation—which in consequence remained a riddle. But then, the wealth of material collected by Morgan in America enabled him to analyse the nature of gentile organisation; and he came to the conclusion that its explanation must be sought not in ideological (e.g. legal or religious), but in material relations. Obviously, this fact is a brilliant confirmation of the materialist method, and nothing more'.<sup>1</sup> This book by Morgan, Lenin wrote, helped to resolve not only the question of gentile organisation, which was 'one of the most difficult, and has evoked a host of theories in explanation of it', but also confirmed, on the basis of material pertaining to ancient history, Marx's and Engels' idea that 'social relations are divided into material and ideological. The latter merely constitute a superstructure on the former, which take shape independent of the will and consciousness of man as (the result) the form of man's activity to maintain his existence'.<sup>2</sup>

In his later works, Lenin frequently referred to *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*. In

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, 'What the "Friends of the People" Are and How They Fight the Social-Democrats', *Collected Works*, Vol. 1, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1977, p. 150.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 151.

his work *The State and Revolution* (1917), he quoted large extracts from it which defined the characteristic features and historically transient nature of the state, while in his lecture 'The State', delivered in 1919 at the Sverdlov Communist University, he called on his audience to make a detailed study of this book by Engels as 'one of the fundamental works of modern socialism'.<sup>1</sup>

In research literature one often comes across the question as to why Engels, in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, did not examine the historical development of the peoples of the East, who are mentioned only occasionally in connection with the emergence of stock-breeding and in other cases. Nor does Engels examine the 'Asiatic mode of production' and the Eastern despotic state. Certain Western authors wonder whether the absence of such an investigation of Eastern society in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* does not signify Engels' unspoken renunciation of any attempts at a theoretical reconstruction of the process whereby the economic and political prerequisites for class antagonisms arise, a reconstruction in his *Anti-Dühring*, written before he became acquainted with the ideas of Lewis Morgan (1878). It is, however, perfectly clear that in both these books Engels is proceeding from the dialectical-materialist concept of history which Marx and he elaborated together. Morgan's identification of the gens as the original unit of society made it possible to apply this methodology in a new direction, without altering its universally valid essence.

It is a well-known fact that in the period of middle, and even more so upper barbarism, the epicentre of human history moved from Asia and the Middle East to southern and western Europe. Vestiges of the preceding stages of the development of ancient society were to be found, in Morgan's lifetime, mainly in the conti-

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, 'The State', p. 473.

ment of America and the South Seas Islands. This fact must be borne in mind, for both Engels and Morgan considered the most important thing to be not a history of culture, but the logic and scientific classification of the natural stages in the socio-economic development of ancient man.

The emphasis in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* on the 'purest' forms and variants of the genesis of various phenomena and processes in ancient society is reminiscent of Marx's selection of England as the most appropriate, indeed, classic model on which to study the origin and development of capitalism. As for the juxtaposition of analogous subjects in *Anti-Dühring* (mainly eastern) and *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (almost exclusively western), in the first Engels emphasised the economic laws determining the disintegration of the primitive communal formation (criticising Dühring's 'theory of force'), while in the second he emphasised the dialectic of the rise of private property and the state as the foundation of antagonistic class society. Furthermore, in the cumbersome states of the ancient East, overburdened with a vast number of ancient rites, the emergence of private property was blocked. Thus they could not serve for the working masses of bourgeois Europe as a sufficiently clear and comprehensible illustration of the theoretical and political conclusions drawn by Engels on the basis of the material gathered by Morgan and himself.

As is indicated in the subtitle and the preface, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* was written in connection with Morgan's monograph *Ancient Society, or Researches in the Lines of Human Progress from Savagery Through Barbarism to Civilisation*, which had been published seven years previously. In the preface to the fourth German edition of his work (1891), Engels once more repeats that Mor-

gan's *Ancient Society* is 'the book upon which the present work is based'.<sup>1</sup>

Explaining the interest shown in the investigation conducted by this great American ethnographer, Engels writes: '...Morgan rediscovered in America, in his own way, the materialist conception of history that had been discovered by Marx forty years ago, and in his comparison of barbarism and civilisation was led by this conception to the same conclusions, in the main points, as Marx had arrived at.'<sup>2</sup>

Basing himself on the scrupulously detailed notes made by Marx on *Ancient Society*, Engels in writing *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* considered problems similar to those indicated by Morgan. This explains, among other things, why, even in researches into the historical past of the European peoples—the Greeks, the Romans and the Germans—'the savage (for example, the Iroquois) is discerned', peeping out from behind their backs, as Marx vividly expressed it in a metaphor taken up by Engels.

High in his praise of the scientific integrity of Morgan, and describing his book as one of the few epoch-making works of his age, Engels underlined the similarity between the reaction on the part of bourgeois science to Morgan's work and to the main work by Marx: 'And just as *Capital* was for years both zealously plagiarised and persistently hushed up on the part of the official economists in Germany, so was Morgan's *Ancient Society* treated by the spokesmen of "prehistoric" science in England'.<sup>3</sup> Engels' book broke through the 'wall of silence' raised by bourgeois science around the

<sup>1</sup> Frederick Engels, 'The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State', in: Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Selected Works* in three volumes, Vol. 3, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1983, p. 201.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 191.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

name and work of the then deceased Morgan.

*Ancient Society*, like *The Origin of the Species* by Darwin became a subject of general debate: it evoked genuine enthusiasm in some, and libellous criticism from others. This reaction had its social causes. 'The fact that Marxist theory had adopted certain of Morgan's theses, had had a decisive influence upon the fate of his work, as it had also upon the fate of anthropological thought in general,' wrote Raoul Makarius in the preface to the first French edition of *Ancient Society*. 'Assimilated to Marxism, Morgan became the pole in relation to which western anthropology attempted to define itself by formulating more precisely what it did not wish to be...' Further on he adds: 'Conservative forces which violently resisted Darwinism and even succeeded in prohibiting its teaching in the United States concentrated their resistance, following their defeat in the biological field, against sociological evolutionism, their battle being waged all the more energetically since, combined with Marxism, it had assumed a persuasive and eminently revolutionary form'.<sup>1</sup>

The ideologists of the bourgeoisie had reason to be concerned, and even frightened by the benevolent interest which Marx and Engels showed in Morgan's theory. This last had two consequences. Firstly, the silence that had surrounded Morgan's work was replaced by malicious attacks upon it, and, secondly, bourgeois authors, by identifying Morgan's theory with Marxism, sought to discredit the latter by attributing to it the inconsistency and a number of erroneous propositions contained in *Ancient Society*. Both these forms of attack are referred to by Makarius. 'His [Morgan's] work had been grafted onto the Marxist doctrine, and reflected its disturbing light. Behind the evolution of the family, whose outlines he traced, one could discern a social evolution which could not but be that sug-

gested by the theory of Marx'. Further on the French ethnographer states that 'the deficiencies and inconsistencies in his [Morgan's—Ed.] concept of evolutionism turned it into Marxism's Achilles' heel. To attack it here was to attack the notion of social evolution in general, striking at a vital point of Marxism, and that without naming its founders'.<sup>1</sup>

The link between the attitude to Morgan and the attitude to Engels was expressed even more clearly by Eleanor Leacock, who issued a new edition of Morgan's *Ancient Society* in 1964. 'Since Morgan's work was used as the basis for Engels' *Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, arguments about Morgan are often veiled arguments about Marx', noted Leacock.<sup>2</sup>

Engels describes Morgan as a researcher who independently formulated the materialist conception of history. However, this does not mean that Morgan is to be seen as a consistent materialist. Engels emphasised that a talented and honest scientist, even though his starting point was the idealist postulates of the bourgeois science of his day, could arrive at essentially materialist conclusions. The theory of the historical process as elaborated by Marx and Engels was convincingly confirmed in a number of points by a scientist who might have seemed far removed in his scientific interests and the object of his research from scientific socialism.

However, Engels provided no grounds for equating the views of Morgan with Marxism, even as regards the interpretation of ancient history. In the preface to his work he made a point of stating that Marx's detailed notes on *Ancient Society* contained critical comments which he reproduced in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*. Morgan wrote a number of sections in his book on the basis of erroneous information. The economic arguments, sufficient for Morgan's

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., pp. XXI, XV.

<sup>2</sup> Eleanor Leacock, 'Morgan and Materialism', in: *Current Anthropology*, Chicago, April 1964, p. 110.

1 R. Makarius, op. cit., p. XIV.

purpose but wholly inadequate for my own, have all been elaborated afresh by myself,<sup>1</sup> writes Engels. In effect, this meant that Engels wrote the second half of his book with very little reference to the material collected by Morgan. He as it were logically correlated Morgan's discovery of the laws governing the evolution of primitive society with the social 'anatomy' of the revolutionary process of the replacement of the primitive communal socio-economic formation by antagonistic-class society, this social anatomy lying outside the sphere of observation of the American ethnographer. Engels also added substantially to the content of almost all the periods into which Morgan had divided ancient history.

The thematic link between *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* and *Ancient Society* makes the comparison of the views of Engels and Morgan on the transition from primitive-communal to antagonistic-class society of particular interest from the point of view of philosophy of history. Such a comparison is all the more important as bourgeois literature on this subject reveals a persistent tendency to treat them as similar, if not identical. Frequently Engels is described by Western authors as merely an adherent of Morgan who used Morgan's theory of the evolution of ancient society in order to substantiate his own socialist views.

Such a biased approach is fundamentally erroneous. In the first place, Engels had been researching into the problem of the emergence and development of class society long before Morgan's book was published, a fact which is eloquently revealed, for example, by his works *The Dialectics of Nature* and *Anti-Dühring*. Secondly, Morgan and Engels pursued their analysis of ancient society from different points of view, exploring different aspects. Morgan approached this subject as an eth-

nographer, carrying out a detailed comparative-historical analysis of what was, at that time, a vast amount of empirical data on the social structure of American Indian tribes. Engels based himself primarily on the general principles of dialectical-materialist world outlook, applying it creatively to his analysis of ancient history. Engels not only supplemented Morgan's work with the results obtained from other research, including his own (on the history of the ancient Germans and Celts), but was also able to construct logical bridges across many of the 'gaps' in the historiography of his day, of whose fragmentary and unreliable nature he frequently complained. Thirdly, Morgan was an intuitive materialist mainly in his manner of thinking, but not in his basic methodological premises. The very titles he gives to the various sections of his book *Ancient Society*, not to mention his various references to Divine providence, to the intent of the Great Intellect to create the barbarian out of the savage, and civilised man out of the barbarian, reveal the idealist views of the author ('Growth of Intellect Through Invention and Discovery', 'Growth of the Idea of Government', 'Growth of the Idea of the Family' and 'Growth of the Idea of Property'). Proclaiming progress to be an attribute of human history, Morgan was at the same time inclined to attribute this progress mainly to the sphere of invention and discovery, visualising the development of social institutions and forms as a unidimensional evolutionary process. However, as an analysis of his diaries and correspondence shows, Morgan was neither a deeply religious man, nor an ideologist of the bourgeoisie.

The spheres of economics, government, family and property Morgan saw as developing autonomously and in parallel, rather than as inter-related and mutually conditioning.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Lewis H. Morgan, *Ancient Society*, The Belknap Press, Cambridge (Mass.), 1964, p. 133.

1 F. Engels, op. cit., p. 192.

Morgan was unable, and did not seek, to link together his study of ancient history and the social problems of his own time. In contrast to Engels, Morgan did not go beyond purely academic research. He limited himself to identifying the origin and succession of social phenomena in various historical epochs, their gradual transformation and the length of time involved. However, Morgan linked this process too firmly to the development of intellect and ideas. Only occasionally and very faintly does he refer to social 'movement' and to 'a growing element of discontent' in the ancient world<sup>1</sup> as a harbinger of social change.

Engels explored from a class position that aspect of historical development which Morgan had left in the shade. He showed that the subject of social change long before bourgeois revolutions was not the Great Intellect, but the popular masses, the working population of the ancient world. As a result, Engels was able to give a materialist explanation of the link between the history of the ancient world and that of the modern world, and to show them as a single process—a fact which does not exclude but, on the contrary, presupposes profound qualitative differences in its naturally progressing stages. It was characteristic of Morgan that he identified the transition from barbarism to civilisation in the forms of the economy, the family, government and property, but did not make any particular analysis of the emergence and development of exploitation, oppression, or any other specific features of the antagonistic-class stage of world history. Nonetheless, the results of his research ultimately refuted those views which were the theoretical basis of bourgeois sociology and which, to a large degree, had been the initial methodological premises of Morgan himself.

Engels' dialectical-materialist interpretation of Morgan's scheme of the historical process follows from

the very nature of the Marxist theory of the development of socio-economic formations. In that scheme, Engels discerned the outline of the primitive-communal society (the period of savagery), the antagonistic-class society (civilisation based on exploitation and oppression), and the transitional period from the first to the second, for which Engels retained Morgan's term of barbarism.

Whereas Morgan produced a vivid evolutionary-genetic picture of ancient history, Engels enriched the schematic periodisation of ancient history systematised by Morgan, with the ideas of class struggle and social revolution. Thus Engels did not merely interpret Morgan's hypothesis from a materialist point of view. He gave a comprehensive analysis of the major laws governing the historical development of the ancient society, the laws not found in Morgan's work, but without which it is impossible to form an adequate picture of social processes in human pre-history, namely, the development of the productive forces and relations of production as the basis of the development of human society, which led to the emergence of private property, of classes and class antagonisms and of the state.

Following Morgan, Engels viewed the mother-right gens as the basic form of self-organisation among primitive men, as the initial 'cell' of society. Out of the mother-right gens with the development of production, came all the diversity of social institutions.

Sometimes Western authors unjustifiably identify matriarchy with gynaeocracy—the absolute dominion of women over men, in the spirit of myths about warlike Amazons, the forerunners of feminism. Both Engels and Morgan understood matriarchy to mean nothing other than the early stage of the tribal organisation, with blood descent reckoned on the female line. Such an understanding of matriarchy does not presuppose any total dominion of women over men. Engels and Morgan recognise the equality of men and women in the matriarchal society with greater economic

<sup>1</sup> Lewis H. Morgan, *op. cit.*, p. 221.

significance at that time of female domestic and gathering labour, and also of inheritance via the female line.

Thus, the contradictions between the systems of kinship and real marital-family relations were identified. Morgan showed that, as a result of economic progress, the tribal system was moving towards monogamy, private property and the state. All of this was new in the science of the day, and provoked a veritable commotion among bourgeois scholars. Moreover, the spontaneously materialistic concepts and conclusions of Morgan concerning tribal society coincided in many ways with the ideas which Marx and Engels developed in their works on herd consciousness and on simple forms of labour, on tribal ownership and clan democracy, on the primitive uniformity and social homogeneity of individuals who were still bound to the umbilical cord of the primitive community, on the self-containment and self-sufficiency of primitive communities, on the economic causes of the emergence of private property and the state, and on exploitation and oppression of man by man.

The scientific results obtained by Morgan fell upon fertile soil. They were freed by Marx and Engels from their idealist layers and inclusions, examined in the light of a dialectical-materialist view of history, and supplemented with new, generalised scientific data. Seen in this way, the laws governing the life of tribal society, discovered by this American ethnographer, made it possible to explain many of the most complex and incomprehensible problems of the primitive stage of mankind. Engels' creative interpretation of *Ancient Society* (with due account taken of notes made by Marx) gave new life to Morgan's scientifically substantiated conclusions, increased their cognitive capacity, removed them from the debating halls of the bourgeois science of the day and—thanks to *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*—made them available to the leading workers and intellectuals and then to the whole of progressive mankind.

## II. THE EMERGENCE AND DEVELOPMENT OF PRIMITIVE-COMMUNAL SOCIETY (SAVAGERY)

Engels, while reproducing in his work the structure of the age of savagery as elaborated by Morgan, reveals and emphasises its unconsciously materialist essence. He draws attention to the formation of speech, to the permanent use of fire, and the invention of the bow and arrow which opened up a new stage in hunting. Moreover, Engels considers these processes not merely as the result of intellectual effort, but as the first and fundamental steps in the progressive development of productive forces. In Engels' interpretation, the very need for discoveries and inventions was conditioned not only by the struggle to survive, but also by the degree of interaction men had already achieved with nature and amongst themselves, by the development of labour as a social phenomenon.

The early stage of savagery is the borderline between the biological world and social life. The lower stage of savagery is, in effect, analogous to that of the primitive herd of 'transitional beings'. Engels had already written of this in his essay 'The Part Played by Labour in the Transition from Ape to Man' (1876), and even earlier in one of his letters to Pyotr Lavrov (1875).<sup>1</sup> This is revealed by a passage which concludes the description of the lower stage of savagery in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*:

<sup>1</sup> Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Selected Works* in three volumes, Vol. 3, p. 479.

'None of the peoples that became known during the historical period were any longer in this primeval state. Although this period may have lasted for many thousands of years, we have no direct evidence of its existence; but once we admit the descent of man from the animal kingdom, the acceptance of this transitional stage is inevitable'.<sup>1</sup>

In writing these words, Engels is, as it were, returning to some of the topics touched upon in his 'The Part Played by Labour in the Transition from Ape to Man'. He once again rightly emphasises the role of speech as the basic means of communication in primitive communities. Engels believes speech to be a means of accumulating, preserving, processing and transmitting information on the surrounding world, a tool of cognition and control which is, by its nature, inaccessible to the animal. Modern researchers are increasingly of the opinion that the word was used as a means of co-ordinating the labour process, of bringing collective influence to bear on the surrounding world and on the animal kingdom.<sup>2</sup> The role of language in the concluding stages of the formation of man and the early stages of the primitive-communal society may have been no less important and effective than the primitive axe and other tools of the period which were, almost literally, an extension of man's natural organs of labour. It was speech which, as an unfailing condition of social labour, became the first means of uniting the emergent primitive community and of separating it from surrounding primitive hordes.

The middle stage of savagery begins with the invention of an 'energy tool'—fire—and heralds the emergence of the classical primitive-communal society. Fire is not only a radically new hunting tool, a means of preparing food and of protection against predators and

<sup>1</sup> F. Engels, op. cit., p. 204.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. B. F. Porshnev, *On the Beginnings of Human History*, Moscow, 1974, pp. 352-60 (in Russian).

cold. Fire radically alters the energy potential, the demographic structure and customs of primitive men. Unable to use fire, emergent man consumed less than 2,000 kilocalories a day (mainly through food: half vegetable, half animal). Fire instantly increased the daily use of energy to 5,000 kilocalories, of which 3,000 were obtained from food, and 2,000 from 'comfortable' warmth.

Fire enabled the old to live out their lives as 'protectors of the fire'. This helped to prolong the period of contact between quickly passing generations and furthered the accumulation, generalisation and transmission of production and social experience, etc. Fire also made it possible to move into new natural zones and places previously unsuitable for human habitation (e.g. caves), that is, it stimulated both migration and settlement. Finally, the task of protecting (preserving) the fire was probably the first visible bond, and therefore the easily recognisable symbol of the unity of and relationship between all the living members of the community.

However, even leaving aside the fact—surprising to Marx—that Morgan underestimated the role of fire in the life of primitive man (Morgan quite unjustifiably classed the discovery of means of producing fire by friction alongside the discovery of moccasins and skis), one can point to a number of important details in this mental 'picture' of the middle stage of savagery where Engels goes considerably further than the author of *Ancient Society*. For example, Engels did not content himself with simply noting the increasing number of sources of the means of subsistence, in particular food. He emphasised the transition from the crudely fashioned, unpolished stone implements of the Palaeolithic period to the creation of the first weapons—the club and the spear—and also the transition from the use of 'natural' fire to the production of fire by friction. At the same time, Engels also

expanded Morgan's concept of fish food, including within it crabs, molluscs and other aquatic animals. He underscored the importance not so much of the consumption of roots and tubers baked in hot ashes or earthen ovens and containing starch as of the development of hunting.

Engels saw the material basis of primitive human life as consisting above all in the production of fire and in hunting. Long before he knew of the views of Morgan, in 'The Part Played by Labour in the Transition from Ape to Man' and other writings included in *Dialectics of Nature*, Engels had defined the discovery of means of obtaining fire by friction as a major advance which finally divided emergent man from the animal world. The produced and harnessed fire has all the features of an energy implement of labour. At the same time, while in no way undervaluing the importance of fishing in the economy, and fish food in the diet of primitive man, Engels showed the incomparably greater role of hunting in achieving the psychobiological formation of homo sapiens. He pointed to the first forms of labour co-operation during the hunt (particularly the battue and driving) for large animals and predators. Moreover, unlike Morgan, Engels did not consider the bow and arrow to be a prerequisite of hunting.

The upper stage of savagery is the period of classical, mature primitive-communal society. This is the society that appears before us in the pages of diaries kept by explorers of past centuries and in the field notes of modern anthropologists. Hunting as the most productive form of acquiring food has pushed the gathering of vegetable food into the background. Most importantly, not only the use, but also the production of implements of labour is becoming more complex. There is a wider range of means of transport, of methods of constructing shelter and making clothes, etc. All of this together provided primitive men, as Engels

rightly commented, with 'a certain mastery of the production of means of subsistence'. One of the natural consequences was an increase of the demographic potential of the assimilated territories, and of the density of population leading to 'beginnings of settlement in villages'.<sup>1</sup> The nomad camps are gradually replaced by dwellings which are either permanent or intended to serve for a long period and which are constructed out of logs and planks shaped by polished stone axes.

Hence, Engels does not see the upper stage of savagery as marked primarily by the use of the bow and arrow, and does not restrict it to the discovery of how to make pottery. As regards the latter, he limits himself to quoting Morgan's point of view on this subject, without defining his own attitude. All that is clear is that, for Engels, this is not one of the important factors. On the other hand, the polished stone axe and fire are, in Engels' opinion, important precisely as means of producing the means of production. The bow and arrow is merely one of the means of obtaining food and of self-defence. Furthermore, the bow and arrow is not found everywhere among primitive men, yet this did not prevent those tribes which did not know of the bow and arrow from moving on to the upper stage of savagery. The bow and arrow is a long-range weapon. It brings the individual 'close' to his prey, making the latter more accessible, while at the same time 'removing' him from direct contact with it as a source of particular danger. Therefore, in those places where there was no large game—in the forests and the hills, on the South Seas Islands, in Australia and in a number of places in Africa, the use, and moreover the invention, of the bow and arrow were of no purpose. In such instances such equivalents as the boomerang, the blowpipe, the bolas, the lasso, the dart and the spear were used.

<sup>1</sup> F. Engels, op. cit., p. 205.

Engels is, in fact, refusing to absolutise the bow and arrow as the material base of the upper stage of savagery, and all the more so, therefore, as the driving force behind the development of primitive society towards barbarism. He sees the reason of Morgan's view of the bow and arrow as lying in the fact that the bow is the first man-made system based on the accumulation and transformation of mechanical energy. It is the concentrated expression of the basic achievements of preceding human experience in adapting to the environment and seeking to change it. For Engels, the bow and arrow was a symbol of social progress. 'Bow, string and arrow,' he wrote, 'constitute a very composite instrument, the invention of which presupposes long accumulated experience and sharpened mental powers, and, consequently, a simultaneous acquaintance with a host of other inventions'.<sup>1</sup>

The diversity of the ecological and demographic conditions in which various tribal groups existed, the shortage of certain natural resources, implements of labour and means of subsistence, and the vicissitudes of a still unstable social mode of life led objectively to a situation in which the bow and arrow came to play a specific historical role. It was the first means of defending tribal territory against claims by other groups, and the means of enforcing one's own will on others. The bow and arrow became a powerful material means of regulating the ever more complex social relations, first between various tribal groups, and then within them. In this sense, as Engels, who had refrained from commenting on Morgan's exaggeration of the importance of pottery, remarked: 'The bow and arrow was for savagery what the iron sword was for barbarism and firearms for civilisation, namely, the decisive weapon'.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> F. Engels, op. cit., p. 205.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

It should be pointed out that Morgan unconsciously introduced into his classification of the stages of ancient society a trace of Darwin's bioevolutionism. For him the key lay in the progression of ways of directly satisfying individual biological requirements by expanding the natural sources of consumption, by which he meant the transition from 'Natural Subsistence upon Fruits and Roots in a Restricted Habitat' to 'Fish Subsistence',<sup>1</sup> etc. This became possible thanks to the improved co-ordination of joint actions, and also thanks to the use of fire and weapons. The most sophisticated of the latter was the bow and arrow. Both Marx, in his notes on *Ancient Society*, and Engels in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* examine the causes of the development of primitive-communal society. As the driving force of this society they single out not so much the 'visible', direct production of the means of subsistence and of man himself as the far less striking production of primitive means of production (primarily implements of labour) and the reproduction of the forms and stereotypes of human intercourse that had naturally taken shape—production relations and other social relations that had not yet budded off from the former. The invention of the bow and arrow at the stage of savagery was not merely a milestone in the development of productive forces, but also the 'seed' of future radical changes in production relations among primitive people.

In speaking of the appearance of the bow and arrow, the emphasis is usually placed either on the psychological-gnoeological aspect, or on the revolution in economic activity which this invention made possible. J. D. Bernal saw the bow and arrow as the first machine in human history, basing his view on the conversion of the potential energy in the drawn bowstring

<sup>1</sup> Cf. L. H. Morgan, op. cit., pp. 24-25.

into the kinetic energy of the flying arrow.<sup>1</sup> Whatever the case may be, the bow and arrow differed radically from previous implements (stone cutters, axes, scrapers, etc.) in that the principle underlying its invention and operation is based neither on the imitation of the natural human organs of labour, nor on the modification of natural materials or 'ready-made' products.

Of no less importance was the fact that the use of the bow and arrow marked the beginning of a change in the structure of the productive forces. This, in its turn, created the prerequisites for break-up of the former production relations in primitive society. Previously, the subjective component in the productive forces—the solidarity of the group, the means of accumulating and transmitting information, skills and abilities, customs and traditions, physical endurance and personal courage—had dominated over the relatively scanty selection of poorly differentiated material (basically stone) tools. With the extension of the range of implements of labour and weapons and their further improvement, the material component in the productive forces, grew increasingly in importance. This, in its turn, brought about a fundamental shift in personal relations. The appearance of the bow and arrow heralded the emergence of a new means of hunting, 'separable' from the particular individual and, at the same time, strengthening his position within the natural environment. As a result, new kinds of implements of labour and of weapons (at first adapted to the special abilities of a given individual) were created which made individual ownership of them possible for the first time due to the fact that they could be made by one man and used by another.

While praising Morgan's periodisation of ancient history, and noting that it corresponded to the historical data available at that time, Engels simultaneously

laid the basis for its revision and correction from the position of the dialectical-materialist conception of history. Thus Morgan's lower stage of savagery became, in Engels' eyes, the age of the primitive herd of 'transitional beings', familiar to the reader from his essay 'The Part Played by Labour in the Transition from Ape to Man'. Consequently, the middle stage of savagery was the stage of emergent men.

In his analysis of ancient history, Engels reveals the fundamental link between man's relation to nature and the relations of men to each other. He investigates the position of the individual within the community, and the specific psychological traits of primitive man. It is precisely here that he goes considerably further than Morgan. The author of *Ancient Society* places the emphasis on the direct link between economic forms and psychological factors, and only through the latter the link with social relations. Engels reverses this second link, placing the social relations between economic and psychological phenomena as the link between them. He also underscores the primacy of the material prerequisites of the development of ancient society over the ideal, the spiritual.

The local restriction of primitive production meant that social relations were 'broken off' at the borders of the tribal group, and weakly differentiated within the group itself. This contradiction, as Engels pointed out, also revealed itself in the social consciousness of the period. Marxist psychology here found an explanation of the extraordinarily conservative psyche of primitive man, for whom memory often took the place of logic. As a result, tradition long remained the most important factor, and was sometimes the only form of regulating social relations. It follows, therefore, that changes in these social relations were not based on psychological change. On the contrary, changes in social relations, which were ultimately determined by economic development, led to changes in social conscious-

1 See J. D. Bernal, *Science in History*, Watts, London, 1954.

ness. In short, feelings of brotherhood and mutual aid (just as the desire to accumulate and social hatred) are not determined directly by production and do not determine it. The connecting link between production and consciousness is social relations.

Thanks to this approach, classical primitive-communal society, as presented by Engels, appears not as some idyllic paradise, the 'Golden Age' of Rousseau, nor as a primitive hell, a 'war of all against all', as in Hobbes, Dühring and the social-Darwinists. Engels saw the essence of social relations in this period as deriving from the extreme dependence of man on nature. This determined both the cohesion within the community (the aspect absolutised by Rousseau), and the rivalry among communities.

In *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, Engels defined the primitive-communal formation from a materialist point of view as that stage of social development which saw the consolidation of social relations among people and the beginning of the process of creating those material and spiritual prerequisites necessary for further social development. However, the communal relations in the primitive society did not contain within themselves the possibility of progressing to an antagonistic social order. This social order was built on the ruins of primitive society, developed on the products of its disintegration. This point must be emphasised, for even today there still exists the mistaken belief that class antagonisms developed within classical primitive-communal society itself.

### III. THE TRANSITION FROM TRIBAL TO CLASS SOCIETY (BARBARISM)

Morgan's concept of 'Barbarism' appears in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* as analogous with the transition from primitive-communal to antagonistic-class society. This transition was brought about by the development of productive forces. Engels convincingly demonstrates that, within the sphere of production relations, the basis for this transition was the social division of labour. This, itself the product of economic development, also presupposed the production of a superfluity of the means of subsistence and the co-existence of various branches of the economy—the objective basis of regular exchange.

Engels' more precise definition of Morgan's periodisation of the development of ancient society involved the stage of barbarism. For Morgan, the lower stage of barbarism, determined on the basis of such a formal criterion as pottery-making, in fact merged with savagery as a period of gathering, hunting and fishing. In contrast, the middle and upper stages of barbarism were viewed from essentially the same point of view—that of the dominance of stock-breeding and tilling the soil (agricultural production). While preserving the sequence of the forms of social labour as given by Morgan, Engels provides a fundamentally different interpretation of their logical-historical order. In *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, the dividing line between savagery and barbarism is seen as the transition from an appropriation economy

to a production economy. The upper stage of barbarism is identified by Engels as constituting a prelude not only to the emergence of civilisation, but also to the emergence of the exploitation and oppression of man by man. It is evidently for this reason that Engels devoted to this period a special chapter—the concluding one—of his work, entitled *Barbarism and Civilisation*.

As the dividing line between savagery and barbarism, Engels took the transition from the period 'in which the appropriation of natural products, ready for use, predominated' to the period in which 'methods of increasing the productivity of nature through human activity were learnt'.<sup>1</sup> Insofar as this period begins, archaeologically speaking, within the framework of the neolithic period and appears as an interruption of the gradual process of the development of man's relations to nature, the term 'neolithic revolution', now accepted in modern science, would appear to be justified. The main content of this period is 'that revolution whereby man ceased to be purely parasitic and, with the adoption of agriculture and stock-raising, became a creature emancipated from the whims of his environment'.<sup>2</sup>

Engels also goes considerably further than Morgan in his interpretation of the stage of barbarism. Morgan defines the age of barbarism primarily in terms of man's capacity to satisfy his requirements for food. To begin with, this was farinaceous food, obtained by tilling the land (the lower stage of barbarism, which continued for a long time in the Western hemisphere). Then came meat and milk (the middle stage of barbarism, which is most typical of the Eastern hemisphere), and, finally, the attainment of 'unlimited subsistence through field agriculture' (the upper stage of barba-

rism).<sup>1</sup> Engels, using the concept developed by Marx and himself according to which the mode of the production of material goods is the basis of the existence and development of society, placed the main emphasis on the extension of the range and improvement by men of the means of production.

At the early stages of history, living labour clearly predominated over labour materialised in implements, while man's dependence on food-obtaining activity no doubt impeded the invention of implements of labour, and particularly those which were designed for the production of other implements and means of production. Nonetheless, modern science is able to trace fairly clearly the development of the material-technical base of primitive society, thereby confirming the ideas which Engels expressed in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*.

Engels believed that without weapons and implements of labour (even made of stone) neither stock-breeding nor agriculture would have been possible.<sup>2</sup>

Approaching this question on the basis of Engels' concept, one may rightly consider the neolithic revolution as constituting a leap in the development of men's productive forces (in the period named by Morgan barbarism). This produced the objective material and the subjective prerequisites for the disintegration of the primitive-communal formation and its inevitable replacement by an antagonistic-class society. The intensive production of numerous implements of labour, designed to carry out effectively a growing number of increasingly complex economic operations, a process which began in the neolithic period, gradually led to the creation of implement manufacture. The implements concerned are narrowly specialised and are operated primarily by muscle power, but they nonetheless

<sup>1</sup> F. Engels, op. cit., p. 209.

<sup>2</sup> V. Gordon Childe, *New Light on the Most Ancient East*, Grove Press, Inc., New York, pp. 1-2.

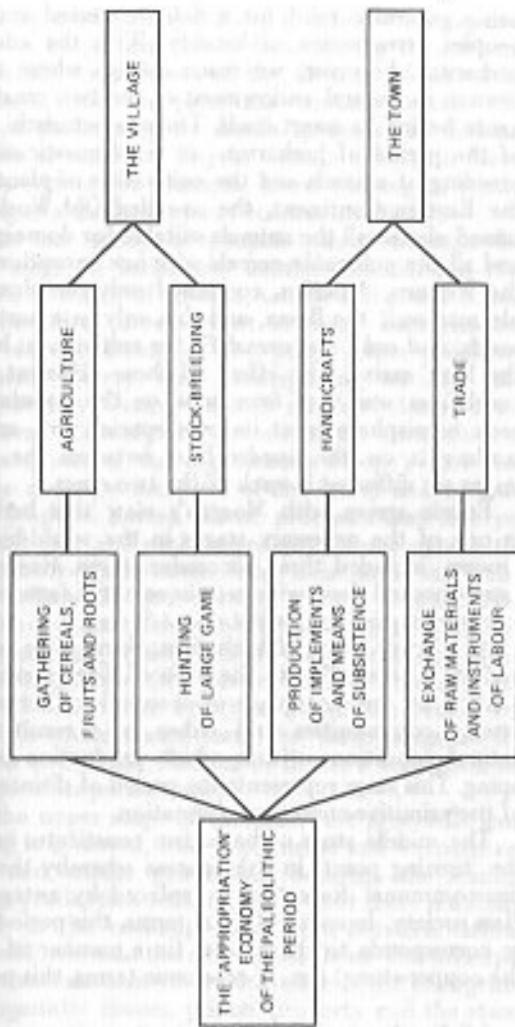
<sup>1</sup> L. H. Morgan, op. cit., pp. 26-30.

<sup>2</sup> F. Engels, op. cit., p. 207.

sharply increase the productivity of social labour. The emergence of implement manufacture was essential to ensure the more productive use of natural resources. Alongside stone, bone, wood and metal, land is becoming increasingly an object of labour as a means of producing food, studying nature and a source of raw materials, together with objects of flora and fauna connected with land. Already the first primitive artificial implements of labour made it possible to noticeably increase the productivity of plants and animals useful to man. The subsequent historical development of agriculture (initially in the form of horticulture) and stock-breeding (nomadic) not only assisted progress in the production of implements, but also increased the number of materials used. This created the conditions necessary for the achievements of implement production to be linked up with the muscle-power of domesticated animals, and with such natural phenomena as wind, water, heat, etc. (Diagram I).

As Engels showed in *The Origin of the Family* and, even earlier, in his *Anti-Dühring*, the factors described above naturally gave rise to the economic conditions which led to the disintegration of the primitive-communal order. These conditions are the division of social labour both between communities and within the community, and the subsequent social, proprietary and political differentiation of the population. This period saw the beginning of irrigation farming and nomadic stock-breeding, of handicrafts and a regular land and sea caravan trade. Furthermore, there is yet another factor which takes us back to the dawn and the zenith of barbarism. As the domestication of animals and the development of new kinds of plants come to play an increasing role in the economic life of early man, the variations in natural conditions also lead to differences and inequality in the level of socio-economic development. 'Up to this point,' writes Engels, 'we could regard the course of evolution as

Diagram I  
The Development of the Productive Forces During the Transition from Primitive-Communal to Class Society



being generally valid for a definite period among all peoples, irrespective of locality. With the advent of barbarism, however, we reach a stage where the difference in natural endowment of the two great continents begins to assert itself. The characteristic feature of the period of barbarism is the domestication and breeding of animals and the cultivation of plants. Now the Eastern Continent, the so-called Old World, contained almost all the animals suitable for domestication and all the cultivable cereals with one exception; while the Western, America, contained only one domesticable mammal, the llama, and this only in a part of the south; and only one cereal fit for cultivation, but that the best, maize. The effect of these different natural conditions was that from now on the population of each hemisphere went its own special way, and the landmarks on the border lines between the various stages are different in each of the two cases.<sup>1</sup>

Engels agrees with Morgan's view that barbarism, as one of the necessary stages in the world-historical process, included three successive stages. However, he supplemented them with certain essential factors which were missing in Morgan's *Ancient Society*.

The lower stage of barbarism, during the neolithic period, is, according to the logic of Engels' reasoning, marked by the emergence of economic differentiation among communities and tribes as a result of the natural conditions within which production is developing. This stage represents the period of disintegration of the primitive-communal formation.

The middle stage of barbarism constitutes in effect the 'turning point' in the process whereby the primitive-communal formation is replaced by antagonistic-class society. In archaeological terms, this period roughly corresponds to the bronze (in a number of regions the copper-stone) age. In economic terms, this period is

marked by the first major social division of labour—the separation of pastoral tribes from among the barbarians. Specific local forms of the division of labour at this stage could in particular contain certain elements of the subsequent trends in the social division of labour as noted by Engels. Certain tribes, the Maya and the Aztecs for example, knew nothing of stock-breeding as a distinct type of economic activity.

While one group of peoples passed through the middle stage of barbarism, another remained at this stage. As a result of specific natural and social conditions, historical development in many barbarian societies slowed down at the point when primitive-communal society was disintegrating to give rise to class society. During the early stages of class society, there were contradictory trends in the formation of class antagonisms: the exploitation of one's own people (the ordinary members of the tribe) and of 'outsiders' (captive slaves). These processes had not yet separated out and each impeded to some extent the development of the other. Later these social structures either collapsed, and society moved forward (the Greco-Mycean and Etruscan civilisations), or were continued, creating a situation of stagnation, of historical 'marking time' (the Ancient East). To quote the words of Marx, one might say that this period expressed in concentrated form the 'birth pangs' of the elements and social relations of the new formation on the ruins of its predecessor.

At the upper stage of barbarism the process of iron smelting is invented, iron implements and weapons are made, and artisan production becomes the leading trend in production activity. As a result there is a sharp increase in the exchange links both between various tribes and communities and within them. The principal socio-economic content of this stage is the emergence of antagonistic classes, private property and the state. At the same time, the institutional and spiritual legacy

<sup>1</sup> F. Engels, op. cit., p. 206.

of primitive-communal society was either discarded or modified in accord with the new social conditions, as Morgan and Engels showed by means of examples from the history of the Greeks, the Italian tribes on the eve of the founding of Rome, the ancient Germans as described by Tacitus, and the Normans during the age of the Vikings.

The upper stage of barbarism passes directly into civilisation—antagonistic-class society. However, in the opinion of Engels, this genetic ‘bond’ should, in no way, obscure ‘the striking contrast between the two’,<sup>1</sup> as different socio-economic systems.

Such a detailed definition of the period of transition from primitive-communal society to class society made it possible to undertake its comprehensive investigation. Engels was able not only to explain why the transition from tribal society to classes and from the lower stage of barbarism (the disintegration of the primitive-communal society) to the upper stage (the intensive formation of classes) occurred, but to illustrate the actual process, and this made it possible to discover the logic of its internal self-propulsion and its interaction with other historical processes. Engels revealed the fundamental laws and inter-relations, the multi-faceted diversity of the forms of transition from primitive society to class society, and took as his special object of study the complex transitional period linking the primitive-communal and antagonistic-class socio-economic formations—the first social revolution in the history of mankind.

Engels’ more detailed definition of the tripartite division of barbarism into the lower, middle and upper stages is important not only for the general periodisation of the process of transition from primitive to class society, but also for an analysis of the laws of development of various aspects of social life, of the trans-

formation of former social institutions. Thus, in terms of the determining form of economic activity, the following structures correspond to the three stages of barbarism: 1) archaic economy; 2) agriculture and stock-breeding; 3) artisan production.<sup>1</sup>

The archaic economy of the lower stage of barbarism consists of an undifferentiated whole comprising specialised gathering, a ‘proto-agriculture’ and the first attempts to domesticate animals—‘proto-stock-breeding’—together with hunting, fishing, etc. Within this archaic economy, within the framework of this undifferentiated multiple economic activity, there gradually emerged those forms of economic activity which most reliably secured the survival of a given social community in concrete natural and demographic conditions. Under the archaic economic system, certain tribes already had a surplus of products. This created the need to co-ordinate economic activity—the objective basis for a specific type of labour intended to regulate and organise production. Here lies the origin of the division between physical and intellectual labour, whose significance in the disintegration of primitive society and the emergence of class society was noted by Marx and Engels in their *German Ideology*. Such a situation sees the beginning of a specific ‘production of ideas’, which Morgan was unable to understand from a materialist point of view.

The first major social division of labour, the differentiation of pastoral tribes from the general mass of barbarians, led to the subsequent development of farming and stock-breeding into independent forms of economic activity. Engels was of the opinion that, at the middle stage of barbarism, there exists a surplus over and above one’s needs and two differing levels

<sup>1</sup> See V. M. Masson, ‘The Emergence of Early Class Society in the Ancient East’, in: *Voprosy istorii*, No. 5, 1967, pp. 87-88.

<sup>1</sup> F. Engels, op. cit., p. 209.

of production existing side by side and together creating the 'conditions for regular exchange'.<sup>1</sup>

The first major social division of labour created the conditions necessary for the regular exchange of a growing surplus of products. The separation of stock-breeding and agriculture as relatively independent forms of economic activity made it possible, to a greater degree than had previously been the case, to take into account the ecological conditions in different geographical areas. This separation of stock-breeding and agriculture occurred, as Engels presupposed, at the borderline between the lower and middle stages of barbarism, when there already existed a regular superfluity of products. A number of tribes raised themselves above not only those ethnic groups which were still living in the age of savagery, but also above those tribes which had lived through the neolithic revolution and had attained the early stage of a production economy.

The comments by Engels with regard to stock-breeding and agriculture, many of which were advanced in the form of suppositions,<sup>2</sup> were, of course, based on the then dominant belief that the classical civilisation of South-West Asia and the Mediterranean were the result of the adoption of agriculture by former pastoral tribes of Semites and Aryans. It was still not known that these nomadic tribes had, in fact, settled on the sites of ancient land-tilling cultures which had been destroyed and which they had partly taken over. They experienced a crisis due to a dramatic change in climatic conditions. It also became clear that the distant ancestors of these nomadic tribes had been familiar with the basic elements of hoe-based agriculture. Engels naturally put the emphasis on the role of the stock-breeding tribes in the first major social division

of labour, leaving the role of agriculture in the period of middle barbarism somewhat in the shade.

However, this cannot serve as grounds for concluding that Engels believed stock-breeding to have arisen before agriculture. Out of the whole history of agriculture and stock-breeding, Engels examined in detail only the transition from nomadic stock-breeding to plough farming in the middle forest and steppe belt. This transition coincides in the main with the transition from the middle to the upper stage of barbarism. Indeed, the period of stock-breeding was an objectively necessary condition for the subsequent emergence and development of intensive land cultivation, that is, tillage, as Engels calls it, with the use of draught animals. It is quite another matter that the pastoral mode of life itself presupposes the existence of primitive hoe-based agriculture at a certain level of development. In those regions where either hoe-based farming (Yucatán, the Mexican uplands, the coast of the Gulf of Guinea and other places in Tropical Africa) or nomadic stock-breeding (Arabia, Central Asia) existed in relative isolation from each other, the middle stage of barbarism continued for a long time. Furthermore, the above-mentioned form of land cultivation may arise independently of stock-breeding and, in certain specific forms, lead to the disintegration of the primitive order and the beginning of the emergence of classes and the state.

Sometimes the view is expressed that Engels underestimated the role of land cultivation in the process of class formation. The text of *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* reveals the opposite. Engels considered plough farming as the production base of the upper stage of barbarism and the potential source of considerable surplus production opening up the way to the emergence of classes. 'Above all,' he wrote, 'we here encounter for the first time the iron ploughshare drawn by cattle, making

<sup>1</sup> F. Engels, op. cit., p. 322.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 206-207.

possible land cultivation on a wide scale—tillage—and, in the conditions then prevailing, a practically unlimited increase in the means of subsistence...<sup>1</sup> As for nomadic stock-breeding, Engels correctly saw it as flourishing at an earlier period and described it in different terms: 'In the middle stage of barbarism we find that the pastoral peoples had in their cattle a form of property which, with sufficiently large herds and flocks, regularly provided a surplus over and above their needs...<sup>2</sup> Is there not a qualitative difference between 'a practically unlimited increase in the means of subsistence' and 'a surplus over and above their needs'? In a number of regions at the middle stage of barbarism, 'pastoral tribes not only produced more articles of food, but also a greater variety than the rest of the barbarians'.<sup>3</sup> However, Engels also writes in clear terms about the development of gardening or hoe-based agriculture alongside stock-breeding, seeing it as the forerunner of plough farming. If not, then with whom could the stock-breeding tribes of barbarians exchange the surplus of their specific product of labour? Under the archaic economy, surplus had only just appeared and was, inevitably, small and unstable. It was no accident that hoe-based agriculture became the economic foundation of the most ancient civilisations of the world.

Palaeo-economic investigations, which base their analysis of the extensive economy of the ancient world on 'biological need for vegetable and meat food, translated into the harvest potential of the fields',<sup>4</sup> have confirmed that the hoe-based land cultivation of the

<sup>1</sup> F. Engels, *op. cit.*, p. 208.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 322.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 317.

<sup>4</sup> See S. N. Bibikov, 'The Economic Complex of the Development of the Three-field System (the Results of an Investigation into Primitive Economy)', in: *Sovetskaya Arkheologiya*, No. 1, 1965, p. 56.

middle stage of barbarism was already producing a considerable (and, most importantly of all, stable) surplus of grain, the main article of exchange with the stock-breeding tribes. According to the calculations of V. M. Masson, at the early stages of agriculture in the subtropical zone it took the farmer a maximum of 60 days to provide himself with a year's supply of grain, while with irrigation farming it took him only 30 days.

However, cattle as an object of exchange, which are easily alienated and moveable, played a more greater role in the emergence of trade and private property. It is also important to note the significance of nomadic stock-breeding in the productive assimilation by man of large areas of steppe and plateau, its role as a stable source of meat and as one of the major prerequisites of plough farming. However, with the emergence of plough farming, the historical perspectives of these forms of production activity undergo a radical change. Tillage is further stimulated by the achievements of handicraft production. Nomadic stock-breeding loses its progressive nature, and nomads are pushed out onto the 'periphery' of history.

One of the aspects of the dialectic of the interaction between society and nature is that the differentiation of various types of production activity depending on the conditions obtaining in a given geographical area is also the objective basis for the diversified assimilation by man of the natural resources of the earth. In this sense the relationship between land cultivation and stock-breeding in the age of barbarism may be viewed as the practical attainment of economic harmony between two vital branches of the economy. At the middle stage of barbarism they appear as co-existing parallel trends in production, and this served as the basis for regular exchange. During the transition to the upper stage of barbarism, these two branches of the economy interpenetrated in the majority of re-

gions and they were synthesised within the framework of a single agricultural economy, standing over and against artisan production. There is a corresponding change in the exchange links, and the second great social division of labour takes place—the separation of artisan production from agriculture.

A specific type of activity emerges, connected with the production of implements of labour and weaponry, of means of transport such as ships and wagons, and of a wide range of consumer and luxury goods. The flowering of artisan production led to the transformation of spontaneous exchange into regular trade and production for the market. This, in turn, meant that, as production was converted into commodity production, the product was alienated from the producer, which led to private property in the means of production and the appearance of special means of coercion.

The relationship of people to nature determined the siting of production, the types of population distribution and socio-economic relations.

The development of agriculture and stock-breeding considerably increased the territory involved in intensive economic advance as compared with archaic economy. Now agriculture and stock-breeding spread to the whole of the subtropics. The progress of artisan production and the invention of iron implements brought about a revolution in agricultural technology and opened up for the production economy areas rich in means of labour—forest and steppe in Western and Eastern Europe, the forest and savannas of Africa south of the Sahara. Engels showed that the significance of iron, with which, in Morgan's words, 'nine-tenths of the battle for civilisation was gained',<sup>1</sup> was not limited to the very fact of its production through smelting. Far more important was the revolution brought about by the production and use of iron implements. 'Iron,'

wrote Engels, 'made possible field agriculture on a larger scale and the clearing of extensive forest tracts for cultivation; it gave the craftsman a tool of such hardness and sharpness that no stone, no other known metal, could withstand it'.<sup>2</sup>

In this way, historical development led to certain shifts in the relations between different tribes and peoples. Savagery was marked by the stereotyping not only of individuals within the community, but of the communities and tribes themselves. Engels said that, in the stone age, historical repetition was the rule. Only in the age of barbarism, as a result of 'different natural conditions ... the population of each hemisphere went its own special way, and the landmarks on the borderlines between the various stages are different in each of the two cases'.<sup>3</sup> The unequal levels of economic and social development among different groups of men is to some extent mitigated by the exchange of goods, ideas, production skills and social institutions.

The peoples of the age of savagery and of the age of barbarism now exist in direct contact one with the other. Metallurgy leads to the separation of weapons from implements of labour and makes it possible for those people who have learned how to produce metal to acquire military supremacy over the others. In the words of the famous English archeologist Gordon Childe, 'Stone age barbarians would be as helpless against civilised troops with copper weapons and helmets as were the Aztecs against the Spaniards'.<sup>4</sup> However, the copper age was unable to provide an effective means of guarding large numbers of captives captured in war, and therefore some of the civilisations of the Ancient East who had defeated neighbouring

<sup>1</sup> F. Engels, op. cit., p. 320.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 206.

<sup>3</sup> V. Gordon Childe, op. cit., p. 244.

<sup>4</sup> L. H. Morgan, op. cit., p. 43.

stone age tribes on the battlefield slaughtered the men and enslaved only the women.

The transition of first sections of mankind to the bronze age aggravated both regional wars and internal social processes. It is no accident that some authors associate the bronze age with frequent wars and the development of eastern despotism as the first crude form of the state. The iron age made it possible for the tribes who possessed iron to predominate over the civilisations of the middle stage of barbarism with their bronze weapons.

In those regions where iron production developed against the background of a local neolithic age (Africa south of the Sahara, Eastern Europe), 'iron gave a new mastery over soil and forest, but also—as El Zouhri [an Arab historian] remarked in his illuminating comment—over stone and bone and wood-using neighbours'.<sup>1</sup> The transition to iron appeared somewhat different in the regions living in the bronze age. The rivalry between cheap, mass-produced iron weapons, and the handsome, but far less effective bronze weapons explains the outcome of many events at the borderline between the middle and upper stages of barbarism. In particular, one can detect here the basic cause of the devastating defeat of Egypt by Assyria, and the replacement of the Mycean by the Doric stage of Greek history, within which the classical slave-owning mode of production was to take shape.

The development of a production economy led to increased settlement and a growth in the population. There are now permanent settlements within which the community, in the course of the development of exchange and the social differentiation that follows therefrom, gradually becomes a village of small peasant landowners. At the middle stage of barbarism, these

settlements are surrounded by defensive walls. Some of them, situated on convenient trading routes, become centres of crafts and artisan production and of administration, developing into towns. 'The town, enclosing houses of stone or brick within its turreted and crenellated stone walls, became the central seat of the tribe or confederacy of tribes,' notes Engels, who believed that this 'was also a symptom of increased danger and need for protection'<sup>2</sup>—a situation particularly characteristic of upper barbarism.

The emergence of towns led to the concentration of artisans of various crafts in one place (a precondition of future manufactory), and, moreover, united them on a far larger scale than that of tribal organisation. This led to increased demand, and to a growing range of products for exchange, to the intensification of social links. The town was also the location of public organs and their officials, of the tribal and community leaders who were developing into a ruling class. The agricultural area around the town became a source of agricultural products and raw materials for the town dwellers, who had abandoned agriculture and stock-breeding. The town and the village are separating.

In his conclusion to the chapter 'Prehistoric Stages of Culture', Engels once again remarks: 'The picture of the evolution of mankind through savagery and barbarism to the beginnings of civilisation that I have here sketched after Morgan is already rich ...' in features which were not to be found in Morgan's *Ancient Society*, 'in new and, what is more, incontestable features, incontestable because they are taken straight from production'.<sup>2</sup> Having promised the reader that he would, in the course of his work, investigate specifically this aspect of the question, Engels concisely sums up Morgan's periodisation in the following terms:

<sup>1</sup> Basil Davidson, *Old Africa Rediscovered*, Victor Gollancz Ltd., London, 1960, p. 83.

<sup>2</sup> F. Engels, op. cit., p. 320.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 208.

'Savagery—the period in which the appropriation of natural products, ready for use, predominated; the things produced by man were, in the main, instruments that facilitated this appropriation. Barbarism—the period in which knowledge of cattle breeding and land cultivation was acquired, in which methods of increasing the productivity of nature through human activity were learnt. Civilisation—the period in which knowledge of the further working up of natural products, of industry proper, and of art was acquired.'<sup>1</sup>

#### IV. THE SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF PRIMITIVE SOCIETY

Engels did not limit himself to merely reworking the enormous wealth of empirical data collected by Morgan from a materialist point of view. In contrast to the author of *Ancient Society*, Engels divided (as he and Marx had once done before, in *The German Ideology*) the process of the life activity of primitive society into two basic types of production: the production of the means of subsistence, and the production of man himself. 'According to the materialistic conception, the determining factor in history is, in the last resort, the production and reproduction of immediate life. But this itself is of a twofold character. On the one hand, the production of the means of subsistence, of food, clothing and shelter and the tools requisite therefore; on the other, the reproduction of human beings themselves, the propagation of the species.'<sup>2</sup>

Engels saw material production of the means of subsistence, and above all implements of labour, as the social basis of the historical evolution of the other aspects of human life and the forms of its organisation. He provided a concise description of the link between the development of social production and the evolution of forms of marriage and family relations, the disintegration of collective ownership and the emergence of new (potentially state-legal) forms and means of regulating production. In this book, Engels

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 209.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 191.

provided a logical explanation of the processes referred to in the title—the genesis of the family, private property and the state.

The first of these Engels describes as follows: 'The social institutions under which men of a definite historical epoch and of a definite country live are conditioned by both kinds of production; by the stage of development of labour, on the one hand, and of the family on the other. The less the development of labour, and the more limited its volume of production and, therefore, the wealth of society, the more preponderatingly does the social order appear to be dominated by ties of sex.'<sup>1</sup>

Engels emphasised that private property appeared not by the will of God, nor by historical accident, nor yet as a result of someone's ill-will, but as the inevitable result of the development of material production and the exchange to which its differentiation gave rise. He pointed out that 'within this structure of society based on ties of sex, the productivity of labour develops more and more; with it, private property and exchange, differences in wealth, the possibility of utilising the labour power of others, and thereby the basis of class antagonisms; new social elements, which strive in the course of generations to adapt the old structure of society to the new conditions, until, finally, the incompatibility of the two leads to a complete revolution'.<sup>2</sup>

The state, as a historically transient social institution, takes shape on the ruins of tribal democratic self-government. The social corrosion of self-government is examined from the point of view of the rapid development of private property thanks to favourable economic conditions. State power, by means of legislation and coercion, institutionalises a certain type of family, and also class, social antagonisms. 'The old

society, built on groups based on ties of sex, bursts asunder in the collision of the newly-developed social classes; in its place a new society appears, constituted in a state, the lower units of which are no longer groups based on ties of sex, but territorial groups; a society in which the family system is entirely dominated by the property system, and in which the class antagonisms and class struggles, which make up the content of all hitherto written history, now freely develop.'<sup>1</sup>

In *Ancient Society* Morgan traced four lines of human progress from savagery through barbarism to civilisation (economics, the family, government, property), treating them essentially as parallel phenomena. Engels, basing himself on the principles of a materialist understanding of history, identified the main line of that development as economics, which objectively served as the foundation for all the remaining aspects of progress, even at the primitive stage. Engels concentrates his attention on the production of instruments of labour.

The basic methodological positions from which Morgan and Engels approached the study of ancient society had, despite certain similarities, a fundamental difference.

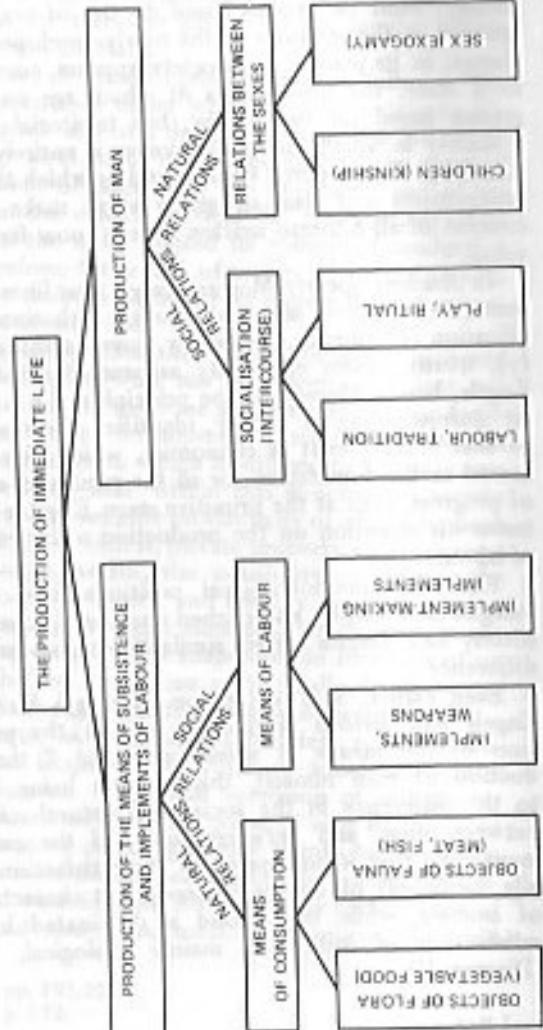
Even earlier, in *The German Ideology*, Marx and Engels had divided production into: 1) the production of the means of subsistence, and 2) the production of man himself, this division being linked to the difference in the social and natural relations between men, and between man and the environment. The first is dominated by the satisfaction (usually mediated) of collective needs, not characteristic of animals, while the second is dominated by the satisfaction of individual, mainly biological, needs (Diagram II).

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., pp. 191-92.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 192.

<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

## 'The Structure of the Primitive Mode of Production



The production of the means of subsistence includes the production of the means of direct consumption, above all food, clothing, shelter, etc., and the social production of the means of production, above all the instruments of labour. Literature on this subject often divides the material production of the primitive period into food-acquiring and non-food-acquiring, that is, mainly the production of implements.

The production of food includes the acquisition of vegetable and meat products, which indirectly presupposes the division of labour into gathering and hunting. Both these basic forms of acquiring food complement each other. Vegetable food contains fewer calories and is more dependent upon seasonal climatic factors, but is more easily preserved and can be obtained without particular risk, etc. Animal food is far more nourishing, but can only be obtained by mobility, concentrated effort and considerable risk. In addition, it is more difficult to preserve (and will remain so up to the discovery of thermal processing). Depending on what was the object of labour—flora or fauna—there was a basic difference in the role of natural and artificial implements in the production of the means of subsistence (gathering and hunting).

The production of man himself presupposes the natural relationship between the sexes and social relations between people, resulting from the participation of the individual in social activity, which is the basic element in the social system. Relations between the sexes include the birth of children as the natural satisfaction of the need to continue the species, and also sexual intercourse as the direct, socially regulated satisfaction of individual natural needs.

Within the process of socialisation, the individual undergoes a socially regulated preparation, by means of upbringing and education, for work and the fulfilment of other social functions. Play, tradition and ritual also fulfil specific functions. Play functions (both

in adults and children) as a specific mode of preparation for work. It includes the mental playing through of work situations, physical training and emotional preparation. Play is used as a means of educating and training the younger generation, of transmitting to them the experience gained in social relations and the knowledge of certain natural laws.

The production of the instruments of labour, and the production of the members of society, both essentially social activities, together compose that which Marx and Engels defined as 'the materialist connection of men with one another', as 'co-operation of several individuals'<sup>1</sup> belonging not merely to one but to several generations. As for the natural (superficially reminiscent of animal activity) forms of production of the means of consumption (food) and sexual relations, these may be described as the materialist link between men and nature.

Attempts are sometimes made to explain the historical evolution of relations between the sexes in men on the basis of a direct analogy between primitive men and anthropoid apes. However, this historical evolution cannot be explained without taking into account the reproduction of individuals possessing those qualities which are essential in order to participate in social forms of vital activity. Changes in the function of the propagation of the species and in the nature of intimate relations between the sexes are increasingly determined by socialisation.

The acquisition by men of meat food, which many researchers associate with the reflex-instinctive 'co-operation' of group predators, cannot be adequately explained if divorced from the production and use of implements of labour and from the initial forms of

production co-operation.

Seen from this point of view, the fundamental difference in the theoretical approach of Morgan and Engels to the same object of investigation—the genesis and development of tribal relations—can be understood more clearly. Of Morgan's four, essentially autonomous-parallel 'lines of progress' from savagery through barbarism to civilisation, Engels saw the economic line as the fundamental one, the basic, the motivating principle. In terms of content, this line is closest to the concept of productive forces as developed by Marx and Engels. It was on this base, intuitively perceived by Morgan, that the three other aspects of social life identified by him matured, then separating off and entering into a process of mutual interaction.

In the primitive period, the previously undivided, multifunctional structure of social relations in the tribal community gradually differentiated out under the pressure of the development of productive forces and changes in the relations of men to each other and to nature.

The three aspects of social life—production, propagation of the species and social regulation—develop in a dialectical-contradictory process of mutual conditioning. For Morgan, the driving force of the historical process was the development of the human intellect as embodied in discoveries and inventions. Engels put the question differently. He investigates the objective processes leading to the emergence of monogamy, private property and the state, and he views the development of the productive forces and the social division of labour as their material base and driving force.

In the following chapters the above-named aspects of social life will be examined from the point of view of their genesis and historical evolution.

<sup>1</sup> Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, 'The German Ideology', in: Karl Marx, Frederick Engels, *Collected Works*, Vol. 5, Moscow, 1976, p. 43.

## V. THE ROLE OF KINSHIP IN PRIMITIVE SOCIETY: GROUP MARRIAGE AND MATRIARCHY

### Systems of Kinship and Their Evolution

Engels placed great value on Morgan's discovery of the contradiction that existed between the traditionally inert system of kinship and the far more dynamic actual family relations. Each Iroquois Indian was perfectly well aware of who were his parents and his children, his blood brothers and sisters, for his tribe already had the pairing family (that is, easily dissoluble monogamous marriage). However, by tradition he referred not only to his own children, but also to the children of his brothers as sons and daughters, and they referred to him as their father. The children of his sisters, however, were his nephews and nieces, and he was to them their uncle. The Iroquois woman, by contrast, referred to the children of her sisters as sons and daughters, and they called her mother, while she was aunt for the children of her brothers.

This system appeared strange to representatives of European culture, and might have seemed a curiosity, were it not for the fact that similar systems of kinship were found in various parts of the world (America, Asia, Africa, and Australia), while traces of such systems were to be found in the not too distant past of the Europeans themselves, including the ancient Greeks, Romans and Germans. Pondering in this connection on 'the decisive role which kinship plays in the social order of all peoples in the stage of savagery and

barbarism', Engels pointed out in particular that in the primitive period 'the terms father, child, brother and sister are no mere honorific titles, but carry with them absolutely definite and very serious mutual obligations, the totality of which forms an essential part of the social constitution of these peoples'.<sup>1</sup> In so saying, Engels was supporting a view held by Morgan, which was attacked by McLennan, who viewed this system of kinship as expressing ritual rules of politeness in social intercourse.

In examining the systems of kinship and actual family relations in both their form and content, Engels quotes that section of Marx's notes on *Ancient Society* where the system of kinship as the focal point of the worldview of the members of primitive society is ranged alongside the 'political, juridical, religious and philosophical systems in general' which belong to later periods. It is precisely on this basis that Marx explains the evolution of mythology (which was, in effect, the ideal reflection of the kinship system, by then defunct in actual life) into religion. Religion as it were assumes the role of a substitute for the former primitive equality, collectivism and democracy. This occurs during the inevitable displacement of the remnants of the tribal system by social-proprietary differentiation and the emergence of class antagonisms.

When working on his essay 'The Part Played by Labour in the Transition from Ape to Man' in 1876, long before he had read Morgan's book, Engels became interested in the origin of kinship systems in primitive society.

Reconstructing the outlines of the primitive form of the family by means of an analysis of kinship systems, Morgan proved that 'the bodies of consanguinei within the American-Indian tribe, designated by the names of animals', were nothing other than gens, 'an institution common to all barbarians up to their entry into civilisation'—and, Engels added—'even

<sup>1</sup> F. Engels, 'The Origin of the Family...', p. 210.

afterwards ... (as far as our present sources of information go).<sup>1</sup>

But how did the gens emerge? What was its origin, and what were the prerequisites of its subsequent evolution?

Morgan was of the opinion, Engels writes, that there existed 'a primitive stage at which promiscuous intercourse prevailed within a tribe, so that every woman belonged equally to every man and, similarly, every man to every woman'.<sup>2</sup> While citing Morgan's view, Engels nonetheless refutes attempts by Social-Darwinists (and such attempts are still made today) to trace the evolutionary origins of promiscuous sexual relations to primitive society prior to the emergence of marriage and the family. He wrote that 'the animal family and primitive human society are incompatible things',<sup>3</sup> that primitive men, having emerged from the animal stage, either knew no family whatsoever, or, at most, knew a family which is never found among animals. Summarising the scientific literature on this point which had been published after Morgan's book, Engels bases his arguments on the thesis put forward by the author of *Des sociétés animales* (Paris, 1877), the French philosopher and sociologist Alfred Espinas, a proponent of the theory of evolution, who wrote that 'among the higher animals the horde and the family are not complementary, but antagonistic to each other', for 'jealousy amongst the males at mating time loosens, or temporarily dissolves, every gregarious horde'.<sup>4</sup>

Biological egoism (as regards sex and food), and isolation hindered the formation of a new type of horde capable of evolving into the forerunner of the social

<sup>1</sup> F. Engels, op. cit., pp. 255-56.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 211-12.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 213.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 214.

cell. It should also be noted that Engels, unlike Morgan, was firmly of the opinion that the primitive collective in its initial stages, with relations analogous to promiscuity, lay outside the framework of human history proper. He believed this stage to correspond to the 'period of transition from animality to humanity'.<sup>1</sup> He also provided a materialist explanation of the advance from animality to humanity:<sup>2</sup> So weaponless an animal as the creature that was becoming man could survive in small numbers also in isolation, with the single pair as the highest form of gregariousness', but 'for evolution out of the animal stage, for the accomplishment of the greatest advance known to nature, an additional element was needed: the replacement of the individual's inadequate power of defence by the united strength and joint effort of the horde'.<sup>2</sup>

Soviet scholars have put forward a theory according to which primitive human hordes (proto-communities) formed a long transitional stage leading from the animal world to the social world.<sup>3</sup> It is suggested that it was during this period that the instinctive, animal-type forms of labour to which Marx referred in *Capital* took shape.<sup>4</sup> At the same time the zoological instincts of man's distant forebears were brought under restraint, including those related to food and sex. 'Mutual toleration among the adult males,' Engels writes, 'freedom from jealousy, was, however, the first condition for the building of those large and enduring groups in the midst of which alone the transition from animal to man could be achieved'.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 215.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 214.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. A. I. Pershits, A. I. Mongait, V. P. Alexeyev, *The History of Primitive Society*, Third Edition, Moscow, 1982, pp. 60-61 (in Russian).

<sup>4</sup> Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol. I, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1983, p. 175.

<sup>5</sup> F. Engels, op. cit., pp. 214-15.

In order to pinpoint more clearly the first stage in the historical evolution of marital-family relations, Engels formulated (in place of the consanguine and punaluan family) a generalised concept not found in Morgan's work—that of the group marriage—which he introduced when revising his book in 1890-91. This concept referred to a specific, initial form of marriage, 'the form in which whole groups of men and whole groups of women belong to one another, and which leaves but little scope for jealousy'.<sup>1</sup> To begin with, all the nuances of sexual partnership and the fate of the children were determined beforehand by custom, which functioned as the first form of social influence on natural relations in the sphere of production of men and the satisfaction of individual sexual (hormonal) needs. Then there emerged 'social driving forces'<sup>2</sup> reflecting a higher stage of production of the means of subsistence and which first existed alongside custom, and then gradually replaced it. Finally, the economic development of mankind led to the historical evolution of the forms of marriage. 'In the beginning,' wrote Engels, 'one came into the world married, married to a whole group of the opposite sex. A similar relation probably existed in the later forms of group marriage, only with an ever increasing narrowing of the group. In the pairing family it is the rule that the mothers arrange their children's marriages; and here also, considerations of new ties of relationship that are to strengthen the young couple's position in the gens and the tribe are the decisive factor. And when, with the predominance of private property over common property, and with the interest in inheritance, father right and monogamy gain the ascendancy, marriage becomes more than ever dependent on economic considerations. The form of marriage by purchase dis-

appears, the transaction itself is to an ever increasing degree carried out in such a way that not only the woman but the man also is appraised, not by his personal qualities, but by his possessions.'<sup>1</sup>

The reproduction of man (the propagation of the species in the biological and intellectual and cultural sense of the term), and the provision for this process in the sphere of the production of the means of subsistence is the focal point for the organisation and regulation of every aspect of the newly emerged mankind. In their turn, the ties of kinship were based on specific relations which determined the behaviour and prestige of the individual in accord with age and sex: 1) *genealogical* (one generation to the next) of the type 'mother-child' (birth, feeding, playing, etc.) and 'father-child' (provision of food, defence against enemies, etc.), and also 2) *sibling* relations of the type 'brother-brother' and 'sister-sister', formed the basis of labour co-operation in the production of the means of subsistence. Moreover, initially the actions of the adults in the gathering of fruit and roots, and in hunting, were very reminiscent of the behaviour of animals.

The main object and 'product' of production of man was, of course, the child. The elderly integrated social memory and functioned above all as teachers and educators. The subjects of reproduction as such were sexually mature men and women. Intimate relations between them were regulated by society. Engels accepts the hypothesis of promiscuity in early primitive society, which, in his opinion, was then replaced not by the consanguine family, where marital groups are divided according to generation, nor by the punaluan family, where brothers and sisters were excluded from marital relations, but by the initial social institution of group marriage. Here the subjects of sexual relations

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 215.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 230.

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 251.

(of course, speaking in the social and not the physiological sense) were not mutually sympathetic individual members of the opposite sex, but groups of individuals who represented the collective 'ego' (I) being linked by blood relationship within the group. However, an essential condition of such sexual relations was that the man and woman concerned not be related by blood.

The problem of exogamy, which excludes marriage within one social group (*gens*, phratry)—requires special examination. For primitive men, the main criterion of social relations and behaviour was based on the kinship system of sexual and feeding prohibitions and preferences. In the literature on this subject it is the prohibitions that are emphasised, as they are the most striking. Moreover, these are usually sexual prohibitions—exogamy—which have long been known. Recently, however, Laura and Raoul Makarius have put forward the idea that a similar social role was played by food prohibitions which related to the sphere of the production of the means of subsistence.

How is this to be explained from a materialist point of view? Possibly by the fact that sexual relations have such a visible 'result' as children, although the link between sexual relations and pregnancy was, according to a number of scholars, unknown to certain recently discovered tribes. The scrupulous identification of the degree and nature of kinship and of sibling brotherhood, ancestor worship, etc., could lead, and indeed sometimes do lead, to the impression that in primitive society the production of the means of subsistence was secondary, and merely 'served' production of man. If, furthermore, in looking at the structure of production, the emphasis is placed not on the social but merely on the physiological (biological) aspect, one might conclude that primitive men were some kind of palaeolithic sex maniacs, and even that it was not labour, but sex which, contrary to the views of Engels, created man, separated him from the animal world

and became the initial basis of social life.

Primitive society differed from the three antagonistic class formations that followed it far more radically than the latter did amongst themselves. The ideas which Engels expressed on this subject in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* have found wide support among scholars of various countries. As Raoul Makarius rightly commented, 'as the phenomena of primitive societies were specific to them, they cannot be interpreted except in terms of the beliefs and behaviour proper to those societies'.<sup>1</sup> The main point here is that 'primitive society is characterised not by family organisation, but by gentile and tribal organisation. Here everything is determined, everything experienced and reflected upon with reference not to the individual, but the group. It is not the individual (nor even a male with his wife and their children), who has to conduct the battle to survive, but a more numerous group, whose relations are not strictly biological, and within which the individual is seen as a particle of the whole'.<sup>2</sup> Tribal relations, influencing as they did the entire way of life of primitive society, could not but be reflected in human consciousness and in such 'pivotal' institutions as taboo, kinship, alliance, exogamy, divisions, totemism and tribal organisation. Seeking to find the objective basis on which to explain the millennial stability and also the inevitable disintegration of the primitive tribal structure, Makarius writes: 'As economic activity is weak and the division of labour insufficient to ensure functional interdependence of the members of society, social cohesion is maintained by kinship relations, which, at this stage, determine the social structure. As the productive forces develop, bringing with them a greater division of labour, the production relations

<sup>1</sup> R. Makarius, op. cit., p. X.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. XXXI.

interweave with the ancient relations of kinship which, from that moment on, begin to disintegrate... When new economic and political structures, which took shape within the old kinship structures, replace them, the old kinship systems fall into disuse.<sup>1</sup> We can accept this idea with one reservation: non-traditional production relations, born of new branches of labour, do not interweave with, but burst out of the old ties of kinship and separate from them. The new production relations enter first into concealed and then increasingly open opposition with the tribal relations, which are hindering their further development. Inasmuch as the development of production relations is based on progressive changes in the productive forces, while the stability of kinship ties depends primarily on the superstructure, the historical perspectives of economic ties become increasingly significant, while the devaluation of the once dominant ties of kinship becomes ever more apparent.

#### Group Marriage: Origin, Evolution, Basic Forms

Morgan's reconstruction of what Engels was later to call group marriage, and even more his belief that unregulated sexual relations—promiscuity—constituted the initial stage of marriage and the family, came as a profound shock to the European philistine accustomed to his stagnant, narrow comfort. Indignation and a storm of hypocritical wrath fell upon the head of Morgan after the publication in Western Europe of *Ancient Society*, just as they had upon Darwin two decades earlier for asserting that man was descended from the ape. Thirty years after the publication of *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, bourgeois public opinion remained the same. The biblical view of

sexual morality and marriage was often seen as representing the original and inherent qualities of the primitive men.<sup>2</sup> In his preface to the first French edition of *Ancient Society*, Makarius explained the similar reaction of bourgeois circles in much the same terms: 'The idea that human beings could have unrestricted sexual relations, even if this happened several thousand years before Christ, aroused scandal because it contradicted the sexual ethic and the concept of marriage professed and traditionally accepted by the Christian nations of Europe'.<sup>3</sup>

In *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, Engels was bitterly sarcastic about the bourgeois' inability to see Morgan's reconstruction of the sexual life of a mankind only just emerged from the animal kingdom in any way other than '... through brothel spectacles'.<sup>4</sup> Engels emphasised that promiscuity at this transitional stage (i.e., strictly speaking at a stage preceding 'completely' human society) was, in the first place, purely hypothetical, and secondly, meant only the absence of customs regulating sexual relations.<sup>4</sup>

The first steps leading from promiscuity to monogamy (that is, a form of marriage in which there is a stable union between one man and one woman) and to selective sexual love were, in Morgan's view, the consanguine and punaluan families. In the first, sexual relations between parents and children, i.e. between different generations, were excluded, while in the second such relations were prohibited between the sons and daughters of one mother. Engels cited these speculative deductions drawn by Morgan with a certain amount of circumspection. As regards the consanguine

<sup>1</sup> Robert Briffault, *The Mothers*, Vol. 2, George Allen & Unwin Ltd., London, 1927, pp. 1-19.

<sup>2</sup> R. Makarius, op. cit., p. XIX.

<sup>3</sup> F. Engels, op. cit., p. 216.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., pp. 215-16.

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., pp. X-XL

family, for example, he wrote that 'even the rawest peoples known to history furnish no verifiable examples of this form of the family'.<sup>1</sup> The same can also be said of the punaluan family which, according to Engels, the author of *Ancient Society* saw as being universal in primitive times. The discovery by 1890-1891 of hitherto unknown forms of group marriage revealed that 'Morgan went too far in this respect'.<sup>2</sup>

In studying these questions it is important to compare the first version of *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (1884) with the considerably revised and expanded fourth edition (1891), which reveals, amongst other things, Engels' clear preference for the concept of group marriage. In Engels' book, the concept of group marriage in effect replaces Morgan's consanguine and punaluan families.

Modern ethnology has confirmed Engels' proposition, which was then not based on sufficient empirical data. In particular, Morgan's hypothesis concerning the consanguine family has been invalidated. As for the punaluan family which Morgan reconstructed on the basis of material on Hawaii, modern ethnologists (including the well-known Soviet ethnologist D. D. Tumarkin) have revealed the following. In the first place, by the time Morgan began his research into the systems of kinship and relationship by marriage, the Hawaiians had long since moved out of the stage of group marriage and savagery. Indeed, the tribal system itself was already disintegrating and social-proprietary differentiation had already begun. Long before the colonialists appeared on the islands, a class society had begun to emerge. Secondly, the custom of punalua, from which this hypothetical form of the family took its name, was found only among the Hawaiian elite, and consisted in the right of both spouses to take a second partner. This second

partner was referred to as 'punalua', that is, close friend or, in Engels' words, intimate companion.<sup>3</sup> This custom, however, was not linked directly to group marriage, but rather reminded of a restricted form of aristocratic endogamy (marriage within a given social group). Thirdly, those from whom Morgan received his information were not only far from competent in this area, but also had a vested interest in justifying their brutality and crime in the Hawaiian Islands to a Europe indignant at their behaviour. It was therefore convenient for them to label the Hawaiians as 'incestuous', describing them as subhuman. Moreover, the man who first suggested to Morgan that he include in his work on the general evolution of marital and family relations an interpretation of the punaluan family drawn up by a missionary was none other than Melville, a minister and friend of his family who had tried unsuccessfully to overcome Morgan's indifference to religion for many years. Thus Engels' comment that the missionaries in Polynesia, like the Spanish monks in America before them, were unable to see in such customs as punalua anything other than mere 'abomination' has proved to be correct.

How and why did group marriage arise? If we come back to Engels' view of the lifestyle of these 'transitional beings' and the division of labour between the sexes, we can, on the basis of contemporary data, mentally reconstruct the division of the primitive human horde at the lower stage of savagery into temporarily isolated groups of hunters and gatherers. This situation radically altered the orientation of the life activity of this primitive horde. The emphasis shifts from the instinct of propagation and satisfaction of sexual needs, which is the main aim uniting individual animals in the animal world, to the joint provision of varied food for the offspring and also for individuals of the opposi-

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 217.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 221.

<sup>3</sup> F. Engels, op. cit., p. 218.

te sex with the help of the implement-based activity. The curious combination of vestiges of sexual (production-sexual) exogamy with recently discovered food exogamy may be viewed as the genetic 'trace' of a society which existed at the lower stage of savagery and which is lost at the threshold of history. It has also been suggested that, as a result of mutation provoked by high levels of radiation and other causes, these transitional beings felt the need for sexual relations continuously, and not simply when the female was on heat, as is the case with animals. Nonetheless, groups composed of one sex remained isolated during the particularly intensive search for food by gathering or hunting. The two closely connected aspects of their life activity—the herd-collective acquisition of the means of subsistence and the reproduction of other individuals—were separated from each other in time and space. However, it was only together that they could ensure the survival and, moreover, evolutionary development of these beings towards the fully human beings and the fully human society.

The situation described above opened up the way for other combinations, not typical of animals, of the two sexual 'halves' of this hypothetical primitive horde. Natural curiosity, and a strongly developed instinct of investigation combined with a reduced sexual interest in those individuals who are constantly present—a feature already noted among primates—could lead to the formation of 'duets' of female gatherers and male hunters who came from different primitive hordes. This would lead to the spontaneous mutual genetic enrichment of these hordes. The division of the horde was compensated for by the combination of their two sexual 'halves' by means of regular sexual relations.

Thus, in a word, from the very beginning of the emergence of the gens, the sphere of the production of the means of subsistence (acquisition of food and

production of implements), and the sphere of the production of man himself (sexual relations, giving birth to children and the transmission of social experience) were marked by a certain degree of contradiction. The production of the means of subsistence presupposed the division, while the production of man himself presupposed, on the contrary, the unity of the two sexual halves of these emergent human collectives. Such, in effect, was the opinion expressed by Engels concerning the emergence of the gens in the middle stage of savagery, its development in the upper stage of savagery, and its prime in the lower stage of barbarism.

The production of the means of subsistence was shaped by the biological inertia of the acquisition of food, and also by the production of labour implements as a result of the genesis of labour. Technical improvements in the production and use of implements of labour were of special importance. At the same time, the very first man-made implements virtually implied the manner in which they were to be used, and in that sense they might be termed 'fossilised concepts'.

The production of man himself was based on the biological inertia of the process of propagation (relations between the sexes), but was radically modified by social factors. The cognition of group, collective instincts which had taken shape during the period of the emergence of man became (by analogy with the 'automatic operations' of the forces of nature) imperative, unquestioned, prohibitions, taboos accepted without argument. The first form of the semi-instinctive cognition of the unity and cohesion of the collective whole was the concept of the totem and its related community. Animals, plants and other natural phenomena were attributed human qualities, and the ancestor-protector of the gens was usually an animal or, more rarely, a bird, a fish or an insect.

Taboo, and the customs which developed out of it and regulated behaviour, played in the sphere of so-

cial intercourse a role which, in the methodological sense, was analogous to that of the implements of labour in relation to the surrounding environment. Therefore, in the collective consciousness which took shape during the transitional stage one can see not only the essential condition of the joint production and use of implements of labour but also the most important prerequisite of social intercourse. Within the collective, social intercourse supposedly centred on custom as the impersonal and imperative regulator of behaviour. Custom expressed in concentrated form the collective or group interests of the given community, refined by natural selection. These interests, in their turn, were differentiated primarily in relation to possible individual manifestations and vestiges of zoological egoism, aggressiveness and unsociability. Furthermore, the sum total of the taboos indicating what was prohibited and restricting individual behaviour also represented a dimly perceived 'ideal' of behaviour approved by the collective. This ideal was based on the 'sacred' experience of ancestors, to whose wisdom and courage their descendants were often obliged for their very survival. The consciousness of primitive man was marked by 1) a tendency to look back into the past, 2) the scrupulous reproduction of the customs of his ancestors, 3) the predominance of direct contact. Ancestors, contemporaries and descendants were perceived psychologically as constituting one whole, an eternally continuing community. Custom was the universal means of social intercourse and of psychological interaction among different generations, groups and individuals, and thus in the social life of primitive man, custom was as essential as the making of implements.

The mediating link between the primary social community and the natural environment was the jointly produced implements of labour. In relation to individuals endowed with consciousness and will, this role of mediator was played by custom of behaviour,

which was orally fixed and therefore stood above the individual and outlived him.

One of Morgan's scientific discoveries, and one which Engels assessed very highly, was that group marriage had preceded the family. Over a long period of time, sexual relations and the whole sphere of production of man was regulated not by the family (which had not yet taken shape) but by the gentile institution of exogamy. Exogamy involved a strict prohibition of marriage and any kind of sexual relations within the gens. Standing in opposition to exogamous prohibitions were endogamous rules restricting the choice of sexual partner—later spouse—to another exogamous gens within the same tribe.

Engels enthusiastically supported Morgan's idea of the dialectic combination of exogamous gentes within the endogamous tribe. Noting that the exogamous 'tribes' predicted by McLennan had still not been discovered, Engels wrote: 'But at the time when group marriage still prevailed—and in all probability it existed everywhere at one time or other—the tribe consisted of a number of groups related by blood on the mother's side, gentes, within which marriage was strictly prohibited, so that although the men of a gens could, and as a rule did, take their wives from within their tribe, they had, however, to take them from outside their gens. Thus, while the gens itself was strictly exogamous, the tribe, embracing all the gentes, was as strictly endogamous. With this, the last remnants of McLennan's artificial structure definitely collapsed.'<sup>1</sup>

It was just at this time that Engels' views on this question was confirmed by the discovery of the so-called 'Gilyatskaya phratia' among the Gilyakhi-Nivkhi living on the lower reaches of the river Amur and on Sakhalin island by the well-known Russian ethnologist L. Ya. Sternberg, who had been exiled there by the Tsarist government. It is worth noting that,

<sup>1</sup> F. Engels, op. cit., p. 201.

of all the European scholars of the day, Engels was the only one to show any interest in the modest essay published in Russian on this question. Noting its importance, Engels wrote a short article entitled 'Another Case of Group Marriage is Discovered'.<sup>1</sup>

Among the Gilyakhi, the marriage system linked not two but three gentes. This three-gentes structure was also typical of ancient Rome. Alongside the 'ego' gens there also existed among the Gilyakhi the 'father-in-law' gens, from which the wives were taken, and the 'son-in-law' gens, to which the daughters went in marriage. The link among these gentes was based not on the prohibition of marriage within the gens, but on an unequivocal demand that marriage be entered into with representatives of a strictly defined gens, on the principle that 'the men must marry the daughters of their mother's brother or, in other words, the daughters in each family belong from birth to the sons of their father's sister'.<sup>2</sup> Here, clearly, we are talking not of families but of whole gentes. The prominent Soviet ethnologist, D. A. Olderogge, a pupil of Sternberg, has investigated similar African groups and suggested that such structures be termed 'the closed-ring' gentes or the three-gentes federation (*gens triplex*).<sup>3</sup> He considered them to be less archaic compared with the two-gentes organisation. At a meeting of the United Scientific Council of the Institutes of the USSR Academy of Sciences, held in besieged Leningrad in May, 1942, Olderogge read a report entitled 'Epigamy and Exogamy' in which he suggested that 'exogamy is the consequence of a more general principle of epigamy, if this last is understood to mean that the

<sup>1</sup> See Marx, Engels, *Werke*, Bd. 22, Dietz Verlag, Berlin, 1963, S. 351-54.

<sup>2</sup> L. Ya. Sternberg, *Family and Gens among the Peoples in North-eastern Asia*, Leningrad, 1933, p. 100 (in Russian).

<sup>3</sup> D. A. Olderogge, *Epigamy*, Selected Articles, Moscow, 1983, pp. 179, 181 (in Russian).

marriage partner must be chosen from among a friendly group'.<sup>1</sup> Trying to reconstruct the logic of the genesis of exogamy (and therefore also endogamy) from epigamy, Olderogge writes: 'Initially, as can be seen in the case of the Gilyatskaya phratry or the closed-ring system of kinship, and also in the case of Australian systems of marriage classes, epigamy required that the men of one particular group marry the women of another particular group. Later, when these systems collapsed, this obligation disappeared, and what remained was a prohibition on marriage within one's own group and the obligation to marry within any friendly group'.<sup>2</sup> In the opinion of Olderogge, recognition of epigamy 'as the basic law of which exogamy was the consequence', will remove the need for investigators to seek biological explanations of the emergence of exogamy.<sup>3</sup>

The above reveals that contemporary Marxist ethnography is developing in accord with the ideas and methodological principles of the study of primitive society put forward by Engels in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*.

Group marriage, as modern science has confirmed, was not merely a sexual union. It represented one of the most important aspects of the life of the unified primitive collective—namely the production of man himself and the production of the means of subsistence.

Modern anthropology has identified and investigated such vestigial forms of group marriage as *sororate* and *fetirate*, which are survivals of marriage with several sisters or several brothers. This practice was gradually replaced by the custom of 'replacement' in which the deceased spouse was replaced by his brother or her sister—namely marriage, to begin with compulsory, and then by preference, with one's brother's widow

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 23.

or one's sister's widower. It would seem that both polygamy and polyandry can be viewed as vestigial forms of group marriage, as also can the practices of 'sacrificial' and 'hospitable' hetaerism: the 'duty' of girls, prior to marrying, to surrender to their potential 'group' husbands, and the custom by which sexually mature women granted their favours to the guest of their husband or father. Of all these vestigial forms, the most widespread today is polygamy. In Western Africa, for example, around 20 per cent of all married males have two or more wives, and in a number of countries (Guinea, the Congo, etc.) this figure reaches 24-25 per cent. Such families usually have a large number of children—up to 20—as the married African woman has given birth to an average of six children by the time she is thirty-five years old.

The group marriage was replaced by the pairing family, which combined features of both group marriage (the relative nature of the link between the man and the woman) and monogamy (the couple).

#### The Discovery of the Mother-Right Gens and the End of the Belief in the Primeval Nature of the Patriarchal Family

According to the views which prevailed in the mid-19th century, the original form of social organisation was the patriarchal family.

Morgan, the first to conduct a scientific investigation into the systems and terminology of kinship, discovered that the original form of social organisation was the mother-right gens. Moreover, in contrast to gynaecocracy, which was first discussed theoretically by the famous Swiss historian and lawyer Johann Jakob Bachofen in *Das Mutterrecht*, Morgan explained the appearance and existence of the mother-right gens by the 'earthly' economic-production factors, and not mystic-religious factors.

Marx, in his notes on Morgan's book used by Engels as the basis for *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, agrees wholeheartedly with Morgan's uncompromising criticism of the view that the gens came after monogamy and was to be seen as an entity composed of families that had united together. Such a view was suggested by the English lawyer and historian H. S. Maine, who was actively involved in drawing up colonial legislation for India. Bourgeois scholars who supported such theories easily became apologists of racism and colonialism and proponents of the unscientific pseudotheory of the mental underdevelopment of peoples at the pre-capitalist, and particularly the pre-class stages of development.

'Up till now, all learned gentlemen, including Sir Henry Maine,' wrote Marx in his notes on Morgan, 'have recognised the Jewish and the Roman forms (of the patriarchal family) as the primeval organisation of society ... and with this is linked the hypothesis on the degeneration of mankind, which is supposed to explain the existence of Barbarians and Savages.'

In *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, Engels fully accepts and energetically supports Morgan's view that the gens preceded the family, and that matriarchy preceded patriarchy. The gens, in the words of Engels, took shape as 'a rigidly limited circle of blood relatives in the female line, who are not allowed to marry one another; from now on it increasingly consolidates itself by other common institutions of a social and religious character, and differentiates itself from the other gentes of the same tribe'.<sup>1</sup>

This quote shows that Engels viewed exogamy as an essential feature of gentile organisation from its very beginning, and therefore, naturally, appearing in its initial form under matriarchy.

In his Preface to the fourth German edition of *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the*

<sup>1</sup> F. Engels, op. cit., p. 221.

State, Engels characteristically puts the emphasis not so much on Morgan's discovery of the gentile relations among North American Indians as the key to major and, at that time, still unresolved questions concerning the history of the ancient Greeks, Romans and Germans,<sup>1</sup> as on his discovery of the original mother-right gens. Engels was full of admiration for the author of *Ancient Society*, who by then had already died, and clearly saw Morgan's greatest achievement as being the 'revolution in outlook' which he had brought about. Expressing this idea, Engels wrote: 'The rediscovery of the original mother-right gens as the stage preliminary to the father-right gens of the civilised peoples has the same significance for the history of primitive society as Darwin's theory of evolution has for biology, and Marx's theory of surplus value for political economy. It enabled Morgan to outline for the first time a history of the family wherein at least the classical stages of development are, on the whole, provisionally established, as far as the material at present available permits. Clearly, this opens a new era in the treatment of the history of primitive society. The mother-right gens has become the pivot around which this entire science turns; since its discovery we know in which direction to conduct our researches, what to investigate and how to classify the results of our investigations. As a consequence, progress in this field is now much more rapid than before Morgan's book appeared.'<sup>2</sup>

However, neither Engels nor modern Marxist scientists ever identified the mother-right gens with unrestricted female power and the tyranny of mythical Amazons. The gens was egalitarian from the outset, that is, based on the principle of social equality, and the determination of kinship (following upon sexual and age differentiation) was based upon the only genea-

logical factor possible at that time—relationship to the mother. Bourgeois anthropology occasionally attempts to support the theory of the original matriarchal system by references to the structure of groups of apes. That such attempts to make 'direct' comparisons are invalid was a point made by Engels in his book.

Engels clearly links the emergence, evolution and collapse of the mother-right gens to the development of productive forces. In particular, he explains the emergence of patriarchy as a consequence of the transition from specialised gathering and the gardening that had developed out of it and from hoe farming to stock-breeding and plough farming.

Archaeology bases its arguments in support of the original matriarchal order not only on a study of implements of labour and the historical sequence of forms of economy, but also on the discovery of so-called 'palaeolithic Venuses'—crude stone figurines with hypertrophied sexual characteristics linked to the propagation of the species. The phallic cult, which symbolised the rise of the patriarchal family, dates to a far later period.

The concept of the matriarchal order preceding the patriarchal order is supported from the ethnographical point of view by Edward Tylor's 'theorem', which he formulated at the end of the last century (1889). Tylor drew attention to the fact that science knew of thousands of indisputable examples of the transition from a matriarchal to a patriarchal society, but there was not a single reliable example of the opposite. And indeed, no example of the transition from a patriarchal to a matriarchal society or from the family to the gens has been found to this day!

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 192.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 201.

## VI THE ORIGIN OF THE MONOGAMOUS FAMILY AND INDIVIDUAL SEX LOVE

### The Historical Evolution of Marriage and Family Relations

The problem of the origin of the family is treated in Engels' book as the genesis of monogamy. This process, noted Engels, is based not on the abstract exclusiveness of sexual love, which is the product of a long and contradictory historical development, but on the formation of private property and the state.

Morgan viewed the ancient history of mankind as the transition from initial sex-based relations among individuals at the lower stage of savagery, that is, under the primitive gentile system to social organisation proper with a political superstructure, which he identified with the state. In the very title of his book, Engels placed the emphasis on the study of the origin of the family, investigating its objective development from group marriage to monogamy. In this connection it would seem to be justifiable to examine the definition of 'marriage' and 'family' as correlated terms, and the actual relations they refer to.

The use of the term 'marriage' usually emphasises the intimate, sexual aspect of the relationship between men and women, the satisfaction of their essentially biological sexual needs. The highest stage of the historical development of marriage is—as Engels particularly noted—individual, selective and reciprocal sexual love inspired by deep feeling. The satisfaction of other biological needs—primarily the need for various means of subsistence, and also the birth and upbringing of children—are seen in this case as something secondary.

The concept of 'family' is usually connected to that of marriage and is derived from it, but cannot be directly restricted to it. In contrast to marriage, the term 'family' presupposes the interaction of individuals in the process of satisfying not only sexual but also food and other daily needs, including a common household, the birth and upbringing of children, the inheritance of property, etc. The family is based upon marriage, but not limited to it. It may include various fragments of the genealogical link of generations, and also representatives of collateral lines of kinship and relationship through marriage. The specific autonomy of the family in relation to marriage, its tendency to separate from marriage, is clearly illustrated in the phenomenon of the family without marriage, which has become the object of scientific research.<sup>1</sup> Historically speaking, the family 'inherits' the functions of the gentile community as the basic unit of the production of the means of subsistence.

In this sense, the family is, if one may put it this way, more 'social' than marriage, while the latter, in its turn, is more biological. The historical dynamic of the correlation of marital and family relations within the framework of the direct propagation of the species consists in the changes in their relative importance vis-à-vis each other, in the growing significance of the institution of the family as it increasingly develops into a 'superstructure' rising on the foundation of marriage.

In actual fact, the counterpoint of the group marriage was the scrupulous ritual regulation of relations between the sexes, a regulation which usually eclipsed its economic basis—'the original communistic common household'.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Milan Bosanac, *The Extra-Marital Family*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1981 (in Russian).

<sup>2</sup> F. Engels, op. cit., pp. 218, 227.

In the pairing family, the production of man and the production of the means of subsistence are combined in roughly equal proportions. The pairing family is characterised by the relative balance between these two trends with a greater historical dynamism in the production of the means of subsistence, which is creating the prerequisites of the transition to monogamy. It is at this point, in Engels' opinion, that the role and importance within society of marital-family and power-proprietary relations are reversed. It was precisely a revolution in the form of the family, consisting in the transition to the patriarchal structure based on the neolithic technological revolution, which caused the first social antagonisms to mature and ensured the subsequent transition to class society. The prerequisites for a fundamental change in the structure of marital-family relations (outside the system of the productive forces proper) took shape gradually. Natural selection as a natural regulator of sexual relations and reproduction was replaced by 'social driving forces'.<sup>1</sup>

The emergent monogamous family was also that institution in which the social contradictions that were later to burst asunder the tribal structure first accumulated and manifested themselves. Emergent social antagonisms also found expression in the inequality of the sexes within the family. Also, beginning with the monogamous family, that is, from the age of civilisation, a radical change occurs. From now on, relations within the family cannot be fundamentally altered without first eliminating social antagonisms, property inequality and the exploitation and oppression of man by man.

Marital-family relations represent the sphere of intimate intercourse between individuals of the opposite sex, who as a family constitute the basic unit of the propagation of the species. As a family they also rep-

resent the primary unit of economic and social activity within society, a direct means of ensuring essential life activity via participation in the social processes of production and consumption. Investigating the dialectic of the family and socio-class relations, Engels traced the historical development of each of the functions of the family and showed that they were determined by the corresponding level of socio-economic development, in particular the social division of labour.

He showed that the three basic forms of marriage—group, pairing and monogamian—were determined by the socio-economic relations operating at that time, and linked these three forms of marriage to the stages of savagery, barbarism and civilisation. According to Engels, the consanguine family and the punaluan family are clearly secondary phenomena. Engels' train of thought clearly coincides with modern views of the initial form of regulating sexual relations. This initial form was one in which the groups of men and women who entered into sexual and marital relations with each other belonged to different but strictly defined inter-marrying gentes. However, they lived apart, each on their own territory, and took part primarily in the economic activity of their own (and not the other) gens.

The group marriage determined above all the sphere of sexual relations; the pairing family fixed parenthood, and the monogamian family emerged as the basic economic, production-consumption unit as a result of the inheritance of property and social privilege. This historical path was not a straight one, however, but acquired many twists and turns due to the inertia of archaic forms of regulating sexual relations, and the effect of contradictions in the socio-economic structures which replaced the gens and the community. Thus the relations between men and women, parents and children in the monogamous family are shaped by socio-historical rather than biological factors. Engels

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., pp. 230, 240, 248.

noted that monogamy not only assimilated certain vestiges of the pairing family and group marriage, but also, and far more importantly, insofar as it exists within a class society, it absorbs all its antagonisms and dooms the woman to slavery. In adultery and prostitution, it reproduces in an altered form the archaic trends of the earliest forms of group marriage.

During the age of barbarism, the pairing family evolves into the large patriarchal family (among a number of peoples the matriarchal family), and the patriarchal family develops towards monogamy. This process is based upon the development of the productive forces, which gives rise to new branches and forms of the division of labour. In particular, the development of stock-breeding and the intensification of relations of exchange underlay the patriarchal gens and the patriarchal family. The development of crafts and regular trade led to the emergence of small, individual, monogamous families.

In the patriarchal family we can trace the link between the development of social antagonisms and the emergence of monogamy. The slave labour of war captives (and, also of debtors) was first exploited within the family. Engels points out that in ancient Rome the term *familia* initially included the sum total of all the slaves in the family subject to the head of that family. Subsequently slave labour was increasingly transferred to the sphere of production, and the family became the sum total of domestic slaves under the *pater familias*. The family reflects, as it were, the dominant pattern of state power relations, and therefore the Roman family is, to a certain degree, a miniature copy of the Roman empire.

In antagonistic society, Engels argues, the relations between men and women are closely bound up 'with money or with any other means of social power'.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> F. Engels, op. cit., p. 255.

Monogamy he described as 'the first form of the family based not on natural but on economic conditions', and therefore 'the first class antagonism which appears in history coincides with the development of the antagonism between man and woman in monogamous marriage, and the first class oppression with that of the female sex by the male'.<sup>2</sup> This explains, according to Engels, the fact that in bourgeois society 'monogamy and prostitution ... although opposites, are nevertheless inseparable opposites, poles of the same social conditions'.<sup>3</sup> Genuine sex love and genuine monogamy require, in Engels' opinion, completely different social conditions which bourgeois society is fundamentally incapable of providing.

#### The Problem of the Genesis of Individual Sex Love and Critique of the Concepts of the 'Sexual Revolution'

In his explanation of the forms of the modern family, Engels pays particular attention to love as one of its most important socio-psychological components. In his book he talks about individual sex love, refuting as unscientific the biblical version of the primitive man as based on eternal love (in which the sexual component was veiled behind abstract-elevated feeling) and the patriarchal-monogamous family as primeval. Engels showed that, at the dawn of history, man knew nothing of family nor of love. That is if we understand love to mean something more than a simple preference of one individual for another in the sphere of intimate relations, a preference based on personal qualities and tastes. That personal beauty, intimate association, similarity in inclinations, etc., aroused desire for sexual intercourse among people of opposite sexes, that men as well as women were not totally indifferent to the question of with whom they entered into

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., pp. 239-40.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 249.

this most intimate relation is obvious. But this is still a far cry from the sex love of our day.<sup>1</sup>

In primitive society, the dominant form of marriage was group marriage, which left little room for the development and manifestation of reciprocal preference between members of the opposite sex. In the temples of the ancient East, there were professional 'priestesses of love', who personalised the trend towards sacrificial hetaerism as a relic of the once customary group marriage. It is also typical that the oldest myths scrupulously related the genealogy of the heroes, the genealogical and sexual relations of the characters, but there is almost no reference to feelings of love, pining, sadness at separation.

In the mythology of antiquity there appears the god of love—Eros, but sex love is accessible only to those who are outside society—the hetaerae (courtesans) and slave-shepherds. However, these feelings were only the precursors of what was later to be known as the feeling of love.

Emphasising the vast historical distance separating the concept of love in ancient Greece and Rome and that which arose in the middle of the 19th century in bourgeois society, Engels writes: 'Our sex love differs materially from the simple sexual desire, the *eros*, of the ancients. First, it presupposes reciprocal love on the part of the loved one; in this respect, the woman stands on a par with the man; whereas in the ancient *eros*, the woman was by no means always consulted. Secondly, sex love attains a degree of intensity and permanency where the two parties regard non-possession or separation as a great, if not the greatest, misfortune; in order to possess each other they take great hazards, even risking life itself—what in antiquity happened, at best, only in cases of adultery. And finally, a new moral standard arises for judging

<sup>1</sup> F. Engels, op. cit., p. 249.

sexual intercourse. The question asked is not only whether such intercourse was legitimate or illicit, but also whether it arose from mutual love or not'.<sup>1</sup>

In the Middle Ages, love is not marriage, but adultery, extra-marital sexual relations. The educated hetaerae, expert in love-making and even advisors on practical matters, are replaced, with the beginnings of the concept of romantic love, by the rough, poorly educated (in comparison with the hetaerae), but strong, courageous, daring medieval knight. 'And the first form of sex love that historically emerges as a passion, and as a passion in which any person (at least of the ruling classes) has a right to indulge, as the highest form of the sexual impulse—which is precisely its specific feature—this, its first form, the chivalrous love of the Middle Ages, was by no means conjugal love. On the contrary, in its classical form, among the Provençals, it steers under full sail towards adultery, the praises of which are sung by their poets.'<sup>2</sup> In a word, the Middle Ages, in the words of Engels, begin where the ancient world left off—with adultery.<sup>3</sup> The tale of romance with a married woman as the beloved of the knight was a historically new form of the development of sex love.

In bourgeois society, the juridical screen of a marriage of formally equal partners barely conceals the hypocrisy and openly commercial nature of actual marital and family relations and sexual relations in general. The invisible social basis of these relations is the form of private ownership of the means of production typical of capitalism. The modern individual family is based on the open or disguised domestic enslavement of the woman; and modern society is a mass composed solely of individual families as its molecules. Today, in the great majority of cases, the

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 250.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 243-44.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 250.

man has to be the earner, the bread-winner of the family, at least among the propertied classes, and this gives him a dominating position which requires no special legal privileges.<sup>1</sup> The bourgeoisie proclaimed the 'rules of the game' of marriage between formally equal partners and the 'respectable' family whose purpose was the accumulation of capital, rules as universal, in principle, as money, and appropriate to the existing production relations. As for the moral aspect of such marital-family relations, based on pure calculation, Engels described them by referring to the aphorism of Fourier, who said: 'Just as in grammar two negatives make a positive, so in the morals of marriage, two prostitutions make one virtue.'<sup>2</sup>

However, as Marx and Engels showed, within bourgeois society the prerequisites for its impending overthrow were taking shape, and the proletariat—the class destined to overthrow it—was emerging. In proletarian families, unlike bourgeois families, formal monogamy is acquiring for the first time the features of genuine equality and reciprocity between the sexes, based on love. Insofar as sex love, by its nature, is exclusive, 'marriage based on sex love is by its very nature monogamy'.<sup>3</sup> The great theoretician of the proletariat was able to detect the features of this cognised monogamy, underpinned by the emerging new morality, in the grimy and over-populated factory housing of Manchester, despite the heavy and seemingly crushing layer of poverty, drunkenness and vulgarity, the low cultural level of the working people of the 'workshop of the world'. There, in 1844, the young Engels worked on his first book, *The Condition of the Working-Class in England*.

In *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and*

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 247.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 245.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 254.

*the State*, the question of marital-family relations based on love among the proletariat is treated with particular force and optimism. Here we find the proto-type of a love that elevates man and is elevated by him, a love freed from bourgeois cynicism and hypocrisy, from the ugly perversions caused by the distorted relations of property which 'materialise' everything, including even intimate relations. Typically, this theme is treated pessimistically today even by many talented Western writers and journalists. Such a situation also exists in other areas of life in bourgeois society. People 'use' one another as if they were disposable consumer goods. Moreover, this process is accelerating. What awaits man, if the humaneness of men's relations to each other is soon to be exhausted? Such is the subject, for example, of the book *Future Shock*, a bestseller written by the American sociologist Alvin Toffler.

A hundred years ago, Engels saw in the abysmal crisis of capitalist society and bourgeois culture the shoots of a new, future socialist type of social relations. This applied also to marital-family relations, whose structure would be totally opposed to philistine monogamy imbued with the spirit of gain. It was the proletariat which Engels saw as the potential source of new relations between men and women. 'Sex love,' he wrote in his book, 'in the relation of husband and wife is and can become the rule only among the oppressed classes, that is, at the present day, among the proletariat, no matter whether this relationship is officially sanctioned or not. But here all the foundations of classical monogamy are removed. Here, there is a complete absence of all property, for the safeguarding and inheritance of which monogamy and male domination were established. Therefore, there is no stimulus whatever here to assert male domination. What is more, the means, too, are absent; bourgeois law, which protects this domination, exists only for the propertied classes and their dealings with the proletarians.'

It costs money, and therefore, owing to the worker's poverty, has no validity in his attitude towards his wife. Personal and social relations of quite a different sort are the decisive factors here. Moreover, since large-scale industry has transferred the woman from the house to the labour market and the factory, and makes her, often enough, the bread-winner of the family, the last remnants of male domination in the proletarian home have lost all foundation—except, perhaps, for some of that brutality towards women which became firmly rooted with the establishment of monogamy.<sup>1</sup>

It is worth mentioning here that it is precisely among English skilled workers that modern bourgeois sociologists have registered the so-called 'symmetrical marriage', which operates outside the framework of traditional bourgeois marriage. Its social essence consists in the roughly equal distribution and joint execution of traditional 'male' and 'female' forms of domestic labour.<sup>2</sup> It is also important to note that the economic causes of this psychological trend were described in broad outline by Engels more than one hundred years ago. In particular, he writes in his book about the absence in the proletarian family of the economic and juridical foundations of classical 'patriarchal' monogamy.

'The proletarian family,' concludes Engels, 'is no longer monogamian in the strict sense, even in cases of the most passionate love and strictest faithfulness of the two parties, and despite all spiritual and worldly benedictions which may have been received. The two eternal adjuncts of monogamy—betaerism and adultery—therefore, play an almost negligible role here; the woman has regained, in fact, the right of separation, and when the man and woman cannot get along they

<sup>1</sup> F. Engels, op. cit., p. 245.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Geoffrey Gorer, *Sex and Marriage in England Today*, Nelson, London, 1971.

prefer to part. In short, proletarian marriage is monogamian in the etymological sense of the word, but by no means in the historical sense.'<sup>1</sup>

Such was Engels' vision of the dawn of a new era in relations between men and women in the society of the future. Radical changes in the sphere of the organisation of production and ownership naturally led to changes in the nature of human relationships, including those between the sexes. The link between the latter and the forms of ownership—and in particular the economic prerequisites for freedom of divorce—were the subject of a special analysis by Engels in his book. Pondering on the society of the future he wrote: 'What will most definitely disappear from monogamy, however, are all the characteristics stamped on it in consequence of its having arisen out of property relationships. These are, first, the dominance of the man, and secondly, the indissolubility of marriage. The predominance of the man in marriage is simply a consequence of his economic predominance and will vanish with it automatically. The indissolubility of marriage is partly the result of the economic conditions under which monogamy arose, and partly a tradition from the time when the connection between these economic conditions and monogamy was not yet correctly understood and was exaggerated by religion. Today it has been breached a thousandfold. If only marriages that are based on love are moral, then, also, only those are moral in which love continues. The duration of the urge of individual sex love differs very much according to the individual, particularly among men; and a definite cessation of affection, or its displacement by a new passionate love, makes separation a blessing for both parties as well as for society. People will only be spared the experience of wading through the useless mire of divorce proceedings.'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> F. Engels, op. cit., p. 245.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 254.

The creative tasks of people of the socialist and communist future as regards radical changes in personal relationships, and also the prospects for the development of monogamy and marital-family relations, were sketched by Engels only in the most general form, as the consequence of radical changes in the relations of production and ownership. 'With the passage of the means of production into common property, the individual family ceases to be the economic unit of society. Private housekeeping is transformed into a social industry. The care and education of the children becomes a public matter. Society takes care of all children equally, irrespective of whether they are born in wedlock or not. Thus, the anxiety about the "consequences", which is today the most important social factor—both moral and economic—that hinders a girl from giving herself freely to the man she loves, disappears.'<sup>1</sup>

These arguments put forward by Engels complemented to a considerable degree with arguments in the field of economics and humanist and ethical considerations Morgan's idea concerning the possible further development of monogamy towards the equality of the sexes, and a change in the nature of monogamy in this context. At the same time, Engels recognised the inevitable limitedness of a detailed view of this problem 'from within' bourgeois society. He was of the opinion that the creation of new forms of marital-family relations and standards of sexual behaviour was the task of the people of the socialist and communist future. Thus, what we can conjecture at present about the regulation of sex relationships after the impending effacement of capitalist production is, in the main, of a negative character, limited mostly to what will vanish. But what will be added? That will be settled after a new generation has grown up: a generation of men who never in all their lives have had occasion to purchase a

woman's surrender either with money or with any other means of social power, and of women who have never been obliged to surrender to any man out of any consideration other than that of real love, or to refrain from giving themselves to their beloved for fear of the economic consequences. Once such people appear, they will not care a rap about what we today think they should do. They will establish their own practice and their own public opinion, conformable therewith, on the practice of each individual—and that's the end of it.'

The crisis of capitalism inevitably makes it fashionable to criticise and reject traditional (i.e. bourgeois) marital-family relations, and to talk about unrestricted freedom of sexual relations. In the 60s and 70s of the 20th century, these trends exploded in what is termed the 'sexual revolution'. This subject was taken up and artificially stimulated by the bourgeois mass media. Learned apologists of capital are always happy to find an opportunity to distract the attention of the masses from the need of a social revolution with utopias of sexual revolution. At the same time, it is difficult to agree with the overall assessment of the entire complex of problems included in the concept of sexual revolution as the expulsion of love and the reduction of relations between the sexes to mere physiology.

First of all it should be noted that the object of the spontaneous protest underlying all forms of sexual revolution is precisely the bourgeois standards of marriage, the family and sexual relations. The manifestly hypocritical, marriage of convenience which turns man, body and soul, into an object of sale and purchase, is opposed with 'pure', erotic, sensual relations.

One must also not overlook the fact that relations between the sexes have been changed by the cult of consumption and the standards of mass culture inculcated by bourgeois society, the tendency to con-

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 249.

<sup>1</sup> F. Engels, op. cit., p. 255.

vert intimate relations into a specific form of escape from the stresses of the surrounding world. The scientific and technological revolution introduced new factors into the economic condition, and consequently the psychological attitudes of women. 'It is true to say,' commented the Soviet philosopher I. S. Andreyeva, 'that in the USA and certain West European countries, the disruption of traditional norms of marriage has gone very far indeed. The move towards economic independence, the nuclear family, the drop in the birth rate, have all created a new background for the sexual activity of women. The weakening of social control as a consequence of urbanisation and the anonymity of city life have brought into question traditional forms of sexual morality. There has been a change in the role of women in sexual life, and in the role of sexual life for women. It is precisely these phenomena that inaugurated a new era in the sexual behaviour of men and women, an era which has been termed the sexual revolution.'<sup>1</sup>

In principle, the development of capitalism, which is inevitably accompanied by periodic economic crises, must, as Engels foresaw, also affect relations between the sexes. In his talk with Clara Zetkin Lenin expressed views on this question which corresponded to what Engels had said in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, and referred directly to this work. Predicting the inevitability of a radical change in the sexual morality of bourgeois society, Lenin stated: '... In this epoch, when mighty states are crumbling to dust, when old relations of domination are being torn asunder, when a whole social world is beginning to perish, the sensations of individual man undergo quick modification. The stimulating thirst for variety of enjoyment readily acquires irresistible force.'

<sup>1</sup> I. S. Andreyeva, 'Socio-philosophical Problems of Sex, Marriage and the Family', in: *Voprosy filosofii*, No. 1, 1980, p. 138.

Forms of marriage and sexual union in the bourgeois sense no longer satisfy. In the sphere of marriage and sexual relations a revolution is approaching in keeping with the proletarian revolution.<sup>1</sup>

The attempt to replace a social with a sexual revolution is typical not only of bourgeois but also of anarchist ideologists. It is important to note that such 'theoretical' models are often reminiscent of former stages in the development of human sexual and marital-family relations long since left behind. Thus, for example, the glorification of sexual anarchy as the norm of relations between men and women is characteristic of de-classed elements, who see it as genuine 'free love', whereas in fact it means nothing other than the rejection of love and a call for a return to the promiscuity which once existed at the transitional stage between the animal world and the earliest human society.

Western literature also widely debates petty-bourgeois demands for 'open' marriage, for the 'ideals' of group sex in a commune (where some give birth to children, others concern themselves with their upbringing, while still others do the domestic chores etc.), shared conjugal, non-marital relations, 'wife-swapping', 'systematic' polygamy and other forms indicative of the decay of bourgeois sexual morality. All of this is nothing other than a reproduction in a caricatured form, in the economic conditions created by the scientific and technological revolution, of the norms of primitive group marriage prior to the neolithic revolution.

The ideals of the feminist movement are, to some extent, reminiscent of unhistorical interpretations of matriarchy. Lying outside the framework of an essentially democratic struggle to achieve sexual equality and end social discrimination against women in the world of capital, the feminist movement is a specific form of political extremism. It is no accident that

<sup>1</sup> Clara Zetkin, *My Recollections of Lenin*, Moscow, 1956, p. 63.

the West German sociologist, Elisabeth Dessaï, sees in negroes 'the black brothers' of women, subjected, as they are, to discrimination.<sup>1</sup> However, the struggle should be waged not against men, but against capital. It is capital which is the root of all evil, the source of all the miseries and tragedies suffered by the men and women of bourgeois society. However, neither the exposure of 'male chauvinism'<sup>2</sup> nor calls for unity on the basis of sex,<sup>3</sup> nor yet a re-orientation of woman's role in the sphere of intimate relations have any meaning or prospect outside the general democratic movements and the revolutionary struggle against bourgeois society. Otherwise feminism becomes utopian and objectively reactionary, for it destroys the unity of the fighters against capitalism and distracts them from their main task.

As for the traditional, so-called marriage of convenience, it is reminiscent of patriarchy to some extent, in that within it capital is seeking to preserve the privileges of the male proprietor. However, the modern age has very little in common with those times when nomadic stock-breeding first arose and, on its basis, plough farming. Therefore attempts by neo-conservatives to 'revive patriarchy' is one of the variants of attempts to turn back the course of history. However, over-hasty attempts to artificially accelerate the course of history, while seemingly anti-bourgeois, are, in effect, pro-bourgeois. In the conversation with Clara Zetkin mentioned above, Lenin made a profound analysis of the 'theoretical' views of 'sexual revolutionaries' who appeared in the USSR in the early 1920s.

'Youth's changed attitude to questions of sexual

<sup>1</sup> Elisabeth Dessaï, *Hat der Mann versagt?*, Rowohlt, Hamburg, 1972.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Michael Korda, *Male Chauvinism: How It Works*, Barrie & Jenkins, London, 1974, p. 47.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *Sisterhood Is Powerful*, An Anthology of Writings from the Women's Liberation Movement, Vintage Books Edition, New York, 1970.

life,' he declared, 'is, of course, presumably based, "as a matter of principle", on theory. Many call their position "revolutionary" and "communist". They sincerely believe that this is so. I, an old man, am not impressed by this. Although I am anything but a morose ascetic, yet quite frequently this so-called "new sex life" of the youth—and often enough of grown-ups too—seems to me purely bourgeois, just a variety of the good old bourgeois brothel. All this has not the faintest resemblance to free love as we Communists understand it. You of course have heard about the famous theory that in communist society satisfying one's sexual desire and craving for love is as simple and trivial as drinking a glass of water. Our young people have gone mad, absolutely mad, over this "glass-of-water" theory... I do not consider the famous glass-of-water theory as Marxist at all, and besides, think it is anti-social. What manifests itself in sex life is not only man's natural instincts, but also what has been derived from culture, be it on a high level or low. Engels pointed out in his *Origin of the Family* how important it is for simple sexual inclination to develop into individual sex love and become refined... Laxity in sexual matters is bourgeois; it is a sign of degeneration.'<sup>1</sup>

The essence of man as a species cannot be reduced to the relationship between the two sexes. Man cannot satisfy all his requirements, aspirations and ideals in the intimate sphere alone, although this sphere is an inseparable element in his harmonious self-expression.

The important conclusions which Engels arrived at regarding the new nature of proletarian marriage based on reciprocal love, joint labour and equality of the spouses are today being consistently implemented in the course of the development of socialist society. Although, of course, in this very delicate area of human relations, the inertia of past traditions is particularly powerful.

<sup>1</sup> Clara Zetkin, op. cit., pp. 64-66.

## VII. THE EMERGENCE OF PRIVATE PROPERTY

### Property as a Social Relationship in the Works of Morgan and Engels

One of the main themes in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* is a dialectical-materialist explanation of the inevitable transition of man from initial collective (gentile-tribal) to private ownership of the means of production, which became the foundation of the exploitation and oppression of man by man.

Engels saw the source of private property in the development of the productive forces, in the increasing division of social labour, and also in the intensification of exchange which followed therefrom. The lack, or the exhaustion of certain natural prerequisites for production, and a deficit of the consumer products resulting from them, increased the social need to regulate the production and consumption. There appeared first social-tribal, communal—and then family and individual forms of property.

The growth of labour productivity led to a dual process. It presupposed an increase in the number of people drawn into inter-related social development via the intensification of various forms of exchange. However, it also led to a reduction in the size of the economic unit serving as the focal point of production and consumption (i. e., maintenance of life), and this, in its turn, tended to isolate the property of various production units, giving rise to the co-existence of traditional inert collective property, and dynamic private property as opposing types of social production relations.

It should be noted that the methodological position of Engels differed fundamentally from that which dominated in the bourgeois science of the day and which was the cause of the inconsistency of Morgan's spontaneously materialist approach to this question. As has been rightly pointed out by the well-known French Marxist scholar, Jean Suret-Canale, owing to the lack of a consistent dialectical concept, Morgan was unable to perceive the contradictions characteristic of social reality.<sup>1</sup>

In particular, Morgan is inclined to identify property with wealth. Wealth he understands as the totality of the means of consumption, valuables and money (and not as the means of production), as the product of intellectual activity (the result of discoveries), as the offspring of human inventiveness, of men's intellectual energy, unpredictable in its consequences. Therefore the socio-economic opposition of collective and private property, resolved during the replacement of the primitive-communal formation by antagonistic class society, was oversimplified by Morgan and reduced to the opposition of poverty and wealth, modest living and abundance, asceticism and luxury. The development of property includes the evolution of collective property and its inevitable transformation into private property—the economic basis of the class antagonisms of civilisation. This process was reduced by Morgan to the theoretically rather feeble and somewhat metaphorical emotional picture of three consecutive 'rules of inheritance': 1) by the gens, 2) by a group of relatives by marriage, 3) by the children and, via them, by other members of a small family group. Furthermore, the author of *Ancient Society* placed the emphasis on the spiritual aspect of the social changes

<sup>1</sup> Jean Suret-Canale, 'Lewis H. Morgan et l'anthropologie moderne', *La Pensée*, numéro spécial, 'Ethnologie', No. 171 (octobre), 1973.

generated by the rise of private property—the appearance of love of wealth, profiteering, the desire to own articles of luxury, moral degeneration, etc.

Engels convincingly demonstrated the economic inevitability and historical necessity of the existence and disintegration of the collective property in primitive society. He analysed the specifics of the operation in pre-capitalist formations of the economic laws discovered by Marx. Engels' research in this field is marked by depth and argued substantiation. In particular, he distinguished between the evolution of production links within the system 'man—nature and implements of labour', which form the basis of the productive forces, and leaps in the development of production relations in the system 'man—man', a system based on the relationships deriving from the ownership of the means of production. Engels spoke of the use, appropriation and distribution of various elements of the productive forces in the process of the evolution of economic activity. As regards the basis, he identified use, possession and right of disposal as the factor indicating the forms and levels of the emergence of property relations.

Comparing the stages of savagery, barbarism and civilisation, Engels distinguishes the genesis and historical evolution of: 1) communal-gentile property within the framework of the primitive-communal formation, 2) separate (Engels' term) property during the transition from the former to antagonistic-class society and, 3) private property as the basis of slavery, feudalism and capitalism.

#### Gentile-Tribal Property

Primitive society is characterised by the fusion of, or, in fact, lack of division between ownership and labour, the relationship between men and their rela-

tionship to the objects of nature and implements of labour, i.e. to the prerequisites (and results) of social production. Possibly the most vivid example of this is provided by male and female ownership of specialised implements of labour. Analysing the economic basis of the tribal system, Engels writes: 'Division of labour was a pure and simple outgrowth of nature; it existed only between the two sexes. The men went to war, hunted, fished, provided the raw material for food and the tools necessary for these pursuits. The women cared for the house, and prepared food and clothing; they cooked, weaved and sewed. Each was master in his or her own field of activity: the men in the forest, the women in the house. Each owned the tools he or she made and used: the men, the weapons and the hunting and fishing tackle, the women, the household goods and utensils... Whatever was produced and used in common was common property: the house, the garden, the long boat.'<sup>1</sup> The determining characteristic of initial primitive property relations was use, closely connected with the consumption of natural objects, and the use of implements of labour necessary to acquire them. It is noteworthy that the prominent French theoretician of scientific socialism, the son-in-law of Marx, Paul Lafargue, identified use as 'the only possible and understandable right to personal ownership known to savages...'<sup>2</sup>

Engels also emphasises the nature of the use made of the means of production and the specifics of the consumption of the products of labour. He points to the initial proximity in time and space, indeed, the direct interpenetration of the processes of production and consumption in ancient society, which knew nothing of a commodity economy. The identity of the subject

<sup>1</sup> F. Engels, op. cit., p. 317.

<sup>2</sup> Paul Lafargue, *La propriété. Origine et évolution*, Librairie Ch. Delagrave, Paris, 1895, p. 344.

of production and the subject of consumption (that is, of course, within the context of a division of labour based on sex and age) ensured the control of the producer over the product he had produced, and control over its fate. 'Production at all former stages of society,' Engels wrote, 'was essentially collective and, likewise, consumption took place by the direct distribution of the products within larger or smaller communistic communities. This production in common was carried on within the narrowest limits, but concomitantly the producers were masters of their process of production and of their product. They knew what became of the product; they consumed it, it did not leave their hands; and as long as production was carried on on this basis, it could not grow beyond the control of the producers, and it could not raise any strange, phantom powers against them, as is the case regularly and inevitably under civilisation.'<sup>1</sup>

#### Separate Ownership of Animal Stock and the Development of Exchange

In defining the transitional nature of property relations in the stage of barbarism, Engels proposes the term 'separate property'.<sup>2</sup> In his opinion, this separate property occupies an intermediary position between communal and private forms of property. He links the appearance of this form of property relations among men to the existence of surplus products, and in particular, animal stock. It was precisely the existence of a stable supply of surplus products that paved the way for regular exchange as an increasingly necessary element in the ever more complex cycle of production and consumption. Exchange made it possible to convert the surplus in one type of production into pro-

ducts created by other branches of production, and also to transform the traditional communal store of means and products of labour into an exchange fund. Disposal of this exchange fund came more and more under the control of the tribal chiefs. 'Originally,' wrote Engels, 'tribe exchange with tribe through their respective gentile chiefs. When, however, the herds began to be converted into separate property, exchange between individuals predominated more and more, until eventually it became the sole form. The principal article which the pastoral tribes offered their neighbours for exchange was cattle; cattle became the commodity by which all other commodities were appraised, and was everywhere readily taken in exchange for other commodities—in short, cattle assumed the function of money, and served as money already at this stage.'<sup>3</sup> Confirmation of Engels' hypothesis on the decisive role of stock-breeding in the emergence of separate property relations, which then—given the appropriate conditions—develop into private property relations, is provided by the results of archaeological excavations in Africa carried out by a Soviet archaeological expedition headed by B. B. Piotrovsky, a member of the USSR Academy of Sciences.<sup>2</sup>

It was primarily the new objects and implements of labour, linked to the development of specialised branches of production activity among ancient men, which became the objects of separate property. This revealed the extent to which this (essentially transitional) form of property was conditioned by the progress of the productive forces. As a result, these productive forces began to exert pressure on the production relations that had existed in the primi-

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 318.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. B. B. Piotrovsky, 'Pages from the History of Northern Nubia', in *Ancient Nubia*, Moscow-Leningrad, 1964, pp. 12-14 (in Russian).

<sup>1</sup> F. Engels, op. cit., p. 330.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 231, 318.

tive-communal socio-economic formation, relations that were impeding the further advance of production.

On the strength of inertia the subject of common property remained the gens, which had now expanded to the level of a tribal confederacy. On the other hand, the development of separate property to include an increasing range of means of production and objects of consumption proceeded mainly within the community, which consequently underwent an evolution which was the opposite of that undergone by the gens; it was divided into large families (also called household communities), and then into ever smaller families which for a long time were still bound together by the tradition of mutual assistance and collective labour.

In the inevitable clash between the gentile and the communal trend, the latter emerged victorious. Engels noted this in one laconic phrase: 'The gens disappeared in the Mark community...'<sup>1</sup> As the scale, complexity and efficiency of social production grew, kinship relations gave way to the new relations of separate property and power emerging from the once integral tribal organisation. A basis and superstructure of a transitional type gradually crystallised out from the originally all-embracing kinship system. Moreover, in many respects these very kinship relations were now conditioned by the mechanisms of social control and stimulation formed outside the kinship system. One such mechanism was exchange.

Exchange tended to lead to the separation of property. Everything that came within its orbit ran the risk of being removed from the traditional relations of collective disposal, ownership and use. From the point of view of political economy, exchange consists in a change in the ownership of that which functions as a bearer of use values. In the sphere of the productive forces, exchange presupposes the alienation of natural

objects and objects of social labour.

The focal point of separate property relations was ownership as the long-term (or deferred, or altered in the process of exchange) possibility of using the consumer properties of the object owned. The number of the objects of ownership increased with the social division of labour. In order to illustrate the emergence and evolution of separate property in land, Engels cites the example of stock-breeders obliged to lay up winter fodder (in particular grain) in the steppes near the Black Sea coast. 'Once grain was grown for cattle,' he writes, 'it soon became human food. The cultivated land still remained tribal property and was assigned first to the gens, which, later, in its turn, distributed it to the household communities for their use, and finally to individuals; these may have had certain rights of possession, but no more.'<sup>2</sup>

Clearly, the emergence and development of separate ownership of cattle occurred more rapidly and easily. 'How and when the herds and flocks were converted from the common property of the tribe or gens into the property of the individual heads of families we do not know to this day,' writes Engels, 'but it must have occurred, in the main, at this stage. The herds and the other new objects of wealth brought about a revolution in the family.... All the surplus now resulting from production fell to the man; the woman shared in consuming it, but she had no share in owning it. The "savage" warrior and hunter had been content to occupy second place in the house and give precedence to the woman. The "gentler" shepherd presuming upon his wealth, pushed forward to first place and forced the woman into second place. And she could not complain. Division of labour in the family had regulated the distribution of property between man and wife. This division of labour remained unchanged, and

<sup>1</sup> F. Engels, op. cit., p. 318.

<sup>2</sup> F. Engels, op. cit., p. 318.

yet it now put the former domestic relationship topsy-turvy simply because the division of labour outside the family had changed.<sup>1</sup> Social production was increasingly orientated towards the market rather than towards production for immediate consumption. The increase in marketable production potential had fundamental social consequences. In the words of Engels, 'This made a breach in the old gentile order: the monogamous family became a power and rose threateningly against the gens.'<sup>2</sup> The emergence and rapid development of separate property became the economic prerequisite of the change from the mother-right gens to the patriarchal family. The mother-right kinship system began to disintegrate under the pressure of incipient private property developing within the community. Exchange, which separated the producer and the consumer, furthered this process. Exchange and separate property developed most dynamically on the basis of stock-breeding. Where, as the result of ecological and other factors, stock-breeding never became widespread, and agriculture remained at the level of hoe farming (the civilisations of pre-Columbian America, Tropical Africa, etc.), the tribal system disintegrated in the form of the late matriarchate.

However, the separation of property and the dramatic struggle between the collectivist principle and the private-property principle (introduced and stimulated by production of commodities) could be seen most vividly in the agricultural peasant community. This was a conservative, yet nonetheless historically dynamic social structure forming a transitional link between the primitive-communal order and antagonistic-class society.

Thus the emergence of the institution of private property is linked to the development of the communi-

ty as the local centre, focal point and primary unit of economic life in primitive society.<sup>1</sup> Ultimately, the development of the community is determined by the type of ownership of the means of production which takes shape in given ecological and demographic conditions.

Within the community, new, antagonistic production relations matured which were directly opposed to primitive-communal relations. The struggle between them shook, and finally destroyed, communal traditions, thereby opening up the way for property differentiation and class antagonisms. The community itself develops from the gentile, via a number of stages and intermediary forms, into the territorial, agricultural community, which absorbs the antagonisms inherent in the given society.

The form in which separate property existed was initially annual redistribution of land (in connection with the cultivation of fallow and waste land) and then less and less frequent redistribution of communal land farmed by individual families, both large and small. In his detailed notes on *Communal Landownership, the Causes, Course and Consequences of Its Disintegration* by M. Kovalevsky, Marx drew attention to a very interesting factor in the historical evolution of land redistribution, a factor which corresponded to the emergence of the internal prerequisites for the development of separate property into private property. He discovered that the redistribution of land by the throwing of lots for different types of allotment had been preceded by the periodic exchange of fields, a practice which had its roots in the still more ancient custom of a regular exchange not only of the household garden plots, but also of the dwellings built on them. The practice noted in the Punjab of pulling down houses and other buildings on a piece of land

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 319.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 320.

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., pp. 218, 311 and others.

prior to leaving it is evidence of the fact that this form of landownership ceased to correspond to the new socio-economic relations.<sup>1</sup>

### The Genesis of Private Property in Land, Money and Mortgage

Having investigated the nature of land redistribution on the territory of Germany over the course of two thousand years, Engels discovered a sequence of stages in the transformation of separate property in land into private property. In *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, this topic is given only cursory treatment. Two years earlier—before he had read Morgan's book and Marx's notes on it—Engels published a pamphlet entitled 'The Mark', addressed to the German peasantry, which was republished three times during the author's lifetime, both as a separate edition and as an appendix to his work *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*.

It is worth noting that, in his study of the genesis of private property in land, Engels looked only briefly at the direct division of labour and the exchange of labour products. He was mainly investigating the transition from stock-breeding to settled farming, and he also clearly identified the natural link between the development of separate ownership of the means of production and the nomadic materialised labour which they embodied. 'The first piece of ground that passed into the private property of individuals was that on which the house stood. The inviolability of the dwelling, that basis of all personal freedom, was transferred from the caravan of the nomadic train to the log house of the stationary peasant, and gradually was

transformed into a complete right of property in the homestead. This had already come about in the time of Tacitus. The free German's homestead must, even in that time, have been excluded from the Mark, and thereby inaccessible to its officials, a safe place of refuge for fugitives... For the sacredness of the dwelling was not the effect but the cause of its transformation into private property.'<sup>1</sup>

Following the homestead arable land also began to pass into the hands of individual families and private persons, and this process was most evident in regions with extreme ecological conditions. Here, in narrow valleys, marshy areas and on high plateaus, the nature of the terrain and the need for special material and forms of labour investments to make the land suitable for farming led necessarily to a situation in which the inherited right of possession was accorded exclusively to individual families.

The last bulwark of the Mark community (as of any agricultural community) were the woods, pastures, waste land, marshland, rivers, ponds, lakes, roads and hunting and fishing sites, all of which were for common use. However, these, too, gradually became the property of individual families. This process, which progressed considerably during the feudal age, brought the Mark, under the subsequent pressure of capitalist relations, to the verge of collapse.

Thus the stages in the development of private landownership are closely bound up and essentially synchronous with the stages in the transition from the tribal to the family, and then to the rural community, and with the division of the latter into wealthy and prosperous on the one hand, and the landless poor on the other. The once free Mark communities become 'villages with peasant proprietors'.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Marx, Engels, *Werke*, Bd. 22, Dietz Verlag, Berlin, 1963, S. 351-54.

<sup>1</sup> Marx, Engels, *Pre-Capitalist Socio-Economic Formations*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1979, pp. 277-78.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 277.

Returning in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* to the problem of the transformation of separate into private property in land, Engels notes ironically: 'In return for liberating the Romans from their own state, the German barbarians appropriated two-thirds of the entire land and divided it among themselves.'<sup>1</sup> This division, Engels notes, was carried out according to the rules of the gentile system. 'In each gens fields and pastures were distributed among the individual households in equal shares by lot. We do not know whether repeated redivisions took place at that time; at all events, this practice was soon discarded in the Roman provinces, and the individual allotment became alienable private property, allodium. Forests and pastures remained undivided for common use; this use and the mode of cultivating the divided land were regulated by ancient custom and the will of the entire community.'<sup>2</sup>

In principle, the transformation of communal property in land into separate property could occur 'from above' and 'from below'. It could develop, as Engels remarked, along two lines. It would seem that, in historical terms, the earlier form was that of its transformation into state property, as was the case with the Roman *ager publicus* 'around which', in the words of Engels, 'the whole internal history of the republic turned'.<sup>3</sup> Then islands of privately-owned land began to appear. State property stood above communal property, and its first historical consequence was the rise of supreme power of the Eastern despotic type, which conserved the structure of the community. Private property, on the other hand, was the product and the means of the disintegration of the community. This struggle between private property and the peasant com-

munity, was, to use Engels' words, a struggle around which the whole internal history of Russia turned after the Reform. To a large degree this is also true of a number of countries in Tropical Africa and other regions of the developing world.

The essence of mature private property is the right to dispose of the means of production and the products of labour. This disposal increasingly took the form of exchange, which gradually divided into two actions separate in time and space—alienation and appropriation, sale and purchase.

Engels viewed metal money, and particularly the minted coin, as 'a new means by which the non-producer could rule the producer and his products'.<sup>1</sup> Unregulated exchange became trade, a specialised activity which consisted in regular exchange via the medium of money, and which represented an extension, as it were, of the process of production beyond production itself and into the sphere of consumption. As a result, there emerged a parasitic class of 'genuine social sycophants'<sup>2</sup>—the merchants.

Together with the far-reaching changes in social relations, there also occurred major changes in the sphere of trade itself and in all property relations. 'The commodity of commodities, which conceals within itself all other commodities, was discovered,' declares Engels: 'the charm that can transform itself at will into anything desirable and desired'.<sup>3</sup> The ominous social shadow of money was the loan, usury, and also the mortgage—a loan with land as the security. Finally, the former member of the gens and the communal landowner could only use the land if he paid a considerable rent or bound himself to personal service. 'As long as the land belonged to the gens,' wrote En-

<sup>1</sup> F. Engels, op. cit., p. 311.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 286.

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 323.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

gels, 'there was no such possibility. But when the new landowner shook off the chains of the paramount title of the gens and tribe, he also tore the bond that had so long tied him inseverably to the soil'.<sup>1</sup>

The apogee of disposal as the 'summit' of private property relations was the social institution of inheritance whereby the owner could bequeath his property, land, livestock, slaves, luxury goods, buildings, money, etc., to heirs named in his own lifetime, usually his children and wife. Gradually, among the Germans, one of the largest potential heirs became the church, which had energetically (and not without vested interest) fostered the inheritance system.<sup>2</sup> Private property penetrated ever more deeply and securely into the fabric of social relations, radically altering their nature.

Thus the relations of use, ownership and disposal took shape historically as the prerequisites for the emergence of private property. 'Use' refers to the use of the prerequisites of production. Possession presupposes the social guarantee of use by a particular subject over a particular period of time. Disposal, or complete ownership, implies the decision on the fate of the object of ownership, up to and including its alienation.

Engels notes that these three components of private property gradually crystallised out during the transitional period, at different levels of society. 'The cultivated land,' wrote Engels, 'still remained tribal property and was assigned first to the gens, which, later, in its turn, distributed it to the household communities for their use, and finally to individuals: these may have had certain rights of possession, but no more.'<sup>3</sup> Only 'the full, free ownership of land implied not only the possibility of unrestricted and uncurtailed

possession, but also the possibility of alienating it'.<sup>1</sup>

Historically, therefore, private property developed out of the communal (insurance, religious, etc.) fund, including war booty, as exchange and trade developed. The first object of this new type of ownership was moveable property, easily transported and alienated: to begin with livestock, then weapons and implements of labour, luxury items and slaves. Subsequently the house and farmyard also became objects of private ownership. The duality of ownership during the transitional period consisted in the fact that moveable property had already become private property, while immovable property (above all, land) was still social, common property. The emergence of private property in land marked the beginning of that age in which private property was to play the determining role in social life. Finally, private property acquired its fully developed forms when money became the regular means of exchange.

The stages in the emergence of private property, briefly outlined by Engels, represent the systematic process of the separation of the property of individual communities within the tribe, and then the separation of the property of the heads of large families within the community and, finally, the concentration of the disposal of the means of production within small, individual families.

The emergence of private property as a qualitatively new form of social relations was a phenomenon alien to the very essence of the primitive communal system. According to the author of *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, the subject of private property were the new social strata: first the military aristocracy and the upper echelons of the priesthood, and then the merchants and money-lenders. The emergence of private property became, in its turn, one of the most important elements in the formation

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 324.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 332.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 318.

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 324.

of antagonistic class society.

In what did the dialectic of the formation of private property consist? Original separation through taboo and the ritual regulation of the least available prerequisites of production arose as a means of protecting them against encroachment by other tribes, communities and gentes. However, having arisen as a social form of securing the life-activity of the collective, separate property subsequently developed into its opposite—into the usurpation of land, implements and other prerequisites of production by a privileged elite. This elite gradually formed a ruling class and no longer took part in the process of social production. On the contrary, those who were directly involved in this process were forcibly divorced from the means of production. The function of uniting the labour force with the means of production was assumed by the ruling social groups, who thereby increased their privileges, wealth and social power.

Private property appeared on the 'surface' of social life largely as the relationship between people and things, rather than the new relationship of people to each other. This gave rise in bourgeois literature to numerous idealistic interpretations of the 'permanence' and the inevitability of private property on the one hand, and its definition as the result of evil intent (Rousseau), of theft (Proudhon), as the consequence of the ineradicable and aggressive hostility of man to man, of theft and plunder (Dühring), on the other. Such views can still be met with today. For example, the well-known American biologist and sociologist Robert Ardrey, expands his idea of the 'permanence' of private property to include the animal kingdom. The predatory animal, in his opinion, defends its territory as man defends his piece of land which provides his means of subsistence.<sup>1</sup> One of the books written

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Robert Ardrey, *Adam kam aus Afrika*, Heyne Verlag, München, 1969.

by Ardrey is entitled *The Territorial Imperative. A Personal Inquiry into the Animal Origins of Property and Nations*.<sup>2</sup> This work is based on an extremely crude and inappropriate analogy which, in addition to being unacceptable in terms of the present level of scientific knowledge, also contains a reactionary political undertone. To quote the words of the Austrian Marxist scholar, Walter Hollitscher, Ardrey is 'projecting' the vices of imperialism 'onto the innocent animal world'.<sup>3</sup>

Private property has a far deeper cause. The very relationship of man to the land, to livestock, to the implements of labour and other prerequisites of production, due to its social nature, itself mediated by the attitude of man to man. This relationship is visible to a greater or lesser degree in the various components of private property—it is most evident in the relations of disposal, and least evident in the relations of use.

According to Engels, private property emerged as a means of regulating social production. Looking at the reform of Solon, the legendary Athenian legislator (circa 509 B.C.), who removed the mortgage posts from the fields, annulled the debts of his fellow Athenians to money-lenders and bought back Athenians sold abroad by their creditors, Engels emphasised specifically this aspect. Thus, an entirely new element was introduced into the constitution: private ownership.<sup>4</sup> It is precisely with the help of private property that the parasitic ruling class, formed of merchants, money-lenders and members of the gentle aristocracy, 'captures the management of production as a whole and economically subjugates the producers to its

<sup>1</sup> Robert Ardrey, *The Territorial Imperative. A Personal Inquiry into the Animal Origins of Property and Nations*, Atheneum, New York, 1966.

<sup>2</sup> Walter Hollitscher, *Aggression in Menschenbild*, Verlag Marxistische Blätter, Frankfurt/Main, 1972, S. 138.

<sup>3</sup> F. Engels, op. cit., p. 281.

rule; a class that makes itself the indispensable intermediary between any two producers and exploits them both'.<sup>1</sup>

The appearance of such an institution as private property in people's lives was conditioned by a particular level of development of the productive forces and of the social division of labour. Thus the emergence of private property is not the fruit of the intellect, and not the realisation of the abstract goals of certain social groups. The emergence of private property is explained by the growing need for a radically new method of socially regulating production and consumption which opened up for mankind the possibility of further developing productive forces and culture.

The genetic 'ladder' of transitional stages which once led man from primitive gentile-tribal property to private property of the bourgeois type can be traced on the basis of African material. Moreover, in Africa, these ancient (that is, in comparison with the present stage in human history) processes today operate side by side, interact and occasionally mingle in the most curious fashion with modern economic trends in the regulation of human relations in terms of land, livestock, implements and other objective prerequisites of social production, trends typical of countries of differing social orientation.

In a large part of Tropical Africa land had not, until very recently, become an object of private property and a means of the exploitation of man by man. The collective ownership of land does, it is true, in the vast majority of cases, co-exist with a family-individual mode of using it. The existence of unused, uncultivated land made collective labour necessary in order to bring such land under cultivation (the struggle with the jungle, hoe farming where the tsetse fly made the use of draught animals and the plough impossible,

etc.). The communal peasant was imbued with the firm belief that the land belonged to his ancestors, who were the first to bring it under cultivation, and that there existed a mystical bond between them and all his living contemporaries. Such views often serve as the ideological and socio-psychological basis of the tradition of collective landownership. 'The living have the use of the land, but they may not alienate it, as it belongs to the dead,'<sup>1</sup> writes the French expert on African culture, Augustin Bernard. Similar statements can be found in works by other authors: 'The land, being the common property of the living and the dead, was of itself inalienable, and there could be no question of turning it into an object of definitive division among the co-proprietors since the majority of the latter were the souls of the dead.'<sup>2</sup>

However, the evolutionary trend towards private property discovered by Engels has begun to operate here also. It was stimulated by the development of commodity-money relations, particularly those of the market. In particular Viviana Paques, a French anthropologist, noted 30 years ago that, among the Bambaras of Mali, the family field, already far less well cared-for than in the past, was giving way to individual fields, and that such individual fields were being created far into the bush in order to move away from the large family and avoid control over the use of individual income and all forms of family control.<sup>3</sup> Although Engels spoke of separate ownership of cattle, it is not difficult to see that this phenomenon is also typical of the evolution of landownership.

<sup>1</sup> Augustin Bernard, *Afrique septentrionale et occidentale*, tome XI, Librairie Armand Colin, Paris, 1939, p. 431.

<sup>2</sup> Jean-Paul Harroy, *Afrique terre qui meurt*, Marcel Hayver, Bruxelles, 1944, p. 336.

<sup>3</sup> Viviana Paques, *Les Bambaras*, Presses universitaires de France, Paris, 1954, p. 78.

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 323.

In capitalist-orientated, newly-independent countries, the policy of the colonial administration aimed at destroying all vestiges of communal ownership and turning the prosperous peasants into a specific version of the 'middle class'—the pillar of local reaction and neo-colonialism—is, in fact, being continued.

In socialist-orientated, newly-independent countries, attempts are being made to use the peasant communal traditions and the underdevelopment of private property in land in order to accelerate the creation of the prerequisites of socialist, anti-bourgeois changes. This, in fact, means that these countries have the possibility of avoiding the private-property stage, which serves as the prerequisite and means of the exploitation of man by man. This trend was noted by Marxist scholars twenty-five years ago. 'The development of production co-operation, particularly in Tropical Africa,' wrote the first director of the Institute of African Studies of the USSR Academy of Sciences, Ivan Potekhin, 'is helped above all by the fact that communal landownership and the habits of collective labour still exist.'<sup>1</sup> '... If the African states turn rapidly in a socialist direction,' noted the British African scholar, Jack Woddis, '... this collective property can be preserved and transformed into fully socialist property which, with the aid of government credits, seed, chemicals and farm machinery, can bring prosperity to the African countryside.'<sup>2</sup>

Realising this possibility has proved far more difficult than could have been anticipated. Nonetheless, in the Tanzanian *Ujamaa*, the Malagasy *Fokonolona*, the Mozambique *Aldeias comunais* and the Ethiopian *peasant associations* one may justifiably see a tendency

in socialist-orientated countries to use communal forms of ownership and habits of common labour which were once typical of the gentile-tribal society and primitive socio-economic formation. It was precisely this, the historical fate of communal ownership and joint labour, that Engels was discussing in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*. Today the prospects for the socio-economic development of the peoples of the newly-independent countries may, of course, differ radically. However, a knowledge of Engels' book is nevertheless essential in elaborating long-term, but also realistic ways and means of effecting fundamental changes in the life of the African peasantry on the principles of social justice, the increased productivity of social labour and the creation of socialist forms of ownership of the means of production.

<sup>1</sup> I. I. Potekhin, *Africa Looks to the Future*, Moscow, 1960, p. 44 (in Russian).

<sup>2</sup> Jack Woddis, *Africa. The Way Ahead*, Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1963, pp. 31-32.

## VIII. THE EMERGENCE OF THE STATE

### The Origin of the State

The social relations typical of the primitive-communal system were regulated by the custom of the gens. Morgan was the first to provide a systematic explanation of the formation of social organisation, founded upon gentes, phratries, and also tribes and confederations of tribes imbued with primeval democracy. He also revealed that the basically unchanging gentile structures and forms of social regulation and control had a certain dynamism, placing the emphasis on the link between the gentile institutions and those of the emerging state, which was based, in his opinion, on the growth of the idea of government.

In contrast to Morgan, Engels did not see class antagonisms as some kind of creation of 'the mind', but as the objective result of the historical process. It was this that enabled him to provide a consistent materialist explanation of Morgan's discovery. Whereas Morgan viewed the institutions of government in an exploiter society through the prism of the gens, Engels detected the elements of the future state in the objective contradictions marking the process of the disintegration of gentile relations. Morgan emphasised *continuity* between the gens and the state, while Engels saw the state as the *negation* of the gens, refuting the idealisation of the gens by the author of *Ancient Society*.

Engels convincingly demonstrated that the 'outgrowth' of state power from various organs of the gens

was only one, evolutionary aspect of the transition from the gentile to the political organisation of society. Of particular importance, in his view, was an analysis of the process by which the tribe was transformed from a narrowly local structure into an increasingly broad association, and also of the process of the disintegration of gentile relations and emergence of new social links—professional, territorial, economic.

The bonds of kinship uniting the population weakened as the size of the social association grew, and also as professional relations developed, a process that was particularly intensive in the towns. 'The indiscriminate mingling of the gentiles and phratries,' commented Engels, 'throughout the whole of Attica, and especially in the city of Athens, increased from generation to generation... The population was now divided according to occupation into rather well-defined groups, each of which had a number of new, common interests that found no place in the gens or phratry and, therefore, necessitated the creation of new offices to attend to them.'<sup>1</sup> In their turn, the emerging professional relations become increasingly territorial and, with the development of exchange, economic.

The development of ways and methods of regulating public affairs and production processes coincides in its broad outlines with the change in social relations. The 'natural structure' of savagery and early barbarism, based on kinship, disintegrates. Social conflict could have no place within this structure. In the first place, individuals of this period were almost 'indistinguishable' from each other. Secondly, 'those concerned decide, and in most cases century-old custom has already regulated everything'.<sup>2</sup>

The objective need for progressive economic development made the ever broader integration of the

<sup>1</sup> F. Engels, op. cit., p. 279.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 266.

producers a necessity. At this stage, an increase in the efficiency of production was achieved mainly by an increase in its scale. The new social relations and links extended further and further beyond the framework of kinship ties and destroyed the gentile-tribal organisation. 'It never developed beyond the tribe,' noted Engels, 'the confederacy of tribes already signified the commencement of its downfall...'<sup>1</sup> The association of communities increased the need to regulate production. Outside the gentile structures, by the fusion of the leadership of various communities, a special stratum took shape which distanced itself from direct participation in production and simply regulated it 'from above'. Their new, proprietary-economic interests went beyond the ties of kinship. Noble and wealthy families, wrote Engels, 'began to unite outside of their gentes into a privileged class...'<sup>2</sup> For the time being this class also dealt with public affairs, but objectively it had its own specific economic interests distinct from public interests.

Such, historically, was the first separation of a ruling class. This class had need of the state. The objective identity of the economic conditions of life of this group of people, ever more sharply divided off from the rest of the population, served as the basis for an association of the representatives of different, at times traditionally hostile gentes in an extra-gentile standing both above and against the gens community. At the other end of the social scale, at the very bottom of the social structure, were people who had no gens, no material wealth, people, whom the twists of fate had expelled from their kinship communities.

As mankind enters the upper stage of barbarism and the iron age, and as social differentiation intensifies, public power (in the form of a military democracy)

rapidly develops into state power. The state is that form of organisation of a class society in which the economic interests of the ruling class are secured by means of special political institutions. Therefore, in the activity of emergent state, the use of armed force came to the fore.

### The Features of the State as a Machine of Suppression

In his book *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, Engels defined the three basic features of the state. Together, these three features comprise the complex of criteria which serve to distinguish the state from the system of public self-government which operated in primitive-communal society. At the same time, these three features indicate the basic trends in the development of the system of self-government into the political organisation of society, the core of which is the state.

Engels showed that the authority of the gentile-tribal elders and the force of custom initially reflected the interests of the whole of society, a society which knew nothing of the developed division of labour and socio-proprietary differentiation between families and individuals. As class antagonisms emerge, the traditional methods of the democratic resolution of public issues give way to public power, which is divorced from the bulk of the population and opposed to it. It was this which determined the appearance of a fundamentally new component of power, unknown to the gentile order. This component is created from a special stratum of the population which personifies the function of exercising power and securing and defending the privileges of the ruling and wealthy elite from possible claims and protests by the bulk of the population. It discharges this function by using the instruments of power, armed and ideological coercion, physical

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 267.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 277.

and psychological repression. Public power, born of the need for 'the performance of common activities arising from the nature of all communities',<sup>1</sup> and preserving a number of these functions, separates off from the mass of the people and increasingly becomes an instrument of coercion in the hands of the privileged élite which develops into the ruling class, a means of enforcing its will and certain stereotypes of social behaviour on the majority of the people. The state becomes a machine for the repression and oppression of disadvantaged social strata and groups by the exploiting élite of society. It is this which constitutes the essence of the state as an institution of antagonistic class society.

Engels' definition of the exploiter state as an 'instrument of exploitation' and 'a machine' for the repression and coercion of the exploited into forced labour was later repeated time and again by Lenin in his work *The State and Revolution*. Using vivid metaphors he depicted 1) the objective growth in the complexity of the state structure, 2) the tremendous growth of the political power and ideological opportunities of the class which has seized state power in order to secure its own basic economic interests.

The establishment of a special public power directed against the mass of the population proved essential because 'a self-acting armed organisation of the population has become impossible since the split into classes'.<sup>2</sup> What, in fact, replaced it? Engels, thinking of ancient Greece, as a classic example of the operation of this particular law, wrote: 'The people's army of the Athenian democracy was an aristocratic public power against the slaves, whom it kept in check; however, a gendarmerie also became necessary to keep the citizens

in check... This public power exists in every state: it consists not merely of armed men, but also of material adjuncts, prisons and institutions of coercion of all kinds, of which gentile [clan] society knew nothing.'<sup>3</sup>

Another feature distinguishing the state from the organs of self-government which operated in the gentile society is, according to Engels, the territorial organisation of the population. To a certain degree it was determined by the location of new branches of the economy and of exchange, brought into being by the neolithic revolution and the emergence (in the course of the break-up of tribes and gentes) of immovable property owned by families and individuals such as land, buildings, etc.

As the old gentile associations had died away and the bond between the members of the gens and their land was now, in effect, a mere formality, the factor uniting the population became a particular economic region. This was the location of social labour by people who belonged to different gentes. Consequently, not the gentile-tribal but property and social differences became the basic form of differentiation among the population. The fact that the people were united for public ends not according to kinship groups but according to their residence on a particular territory further undermined the gentile order. 'Not membership of a body of *consanguinei*, but place of domicile was now the deciding factor,' wrote Engels, describing the new constitution introduced by Cleisthenes, which he assessed as a revolution. 'Not people, but territory was now divided; politically, the inhabitants became mere attachments of the territory.'<sup>4</sup>

The third feature of the state is identified by Engels as public taxation and the existence of state debts.

<sup>1</sup> Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol. III, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1977, p. 384.

<sup>2</sup> F. Engels, op. cit., p. 327.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 282.

The significance of this feature of the state is underestimated in literature on this topic. Taxes are a particular source of funds to maintain the machine that represses the working people at the cost of the exploited working people themselves. Moreover, it is an additional (in relation to direct production forms of exploitation), extra-production method of alienating the surplus and partly the necessary product from the exploited classes. Taxes, and also state loans (raised from other states and within the specific state), gradually developed into an all-embracing state system of taxation. In effect, this meant the creation of autonomous system for securing the economic viability of the state, a system increasingly independent of the will of individual citizens, and which served to widen still further the gulf between the state and the working people. In order to maintain the public power, which had raised itself above and stood over against the mass of the population, Engels writes, 'contributions from the citizens become necessary—taxes. These were absolutely unknown in gentile society...'. And he continues: 'As civilisation advances, these taxes become inadequate; the state makes drafts on the future, contracts loans, *public debts*'.<sup>1</sup>

#### The Dialectic of the Genesis of the State

One of the aspects of the dialectic of the genesis of the state is that it developed on the ruins of the gens. At the same time, the state is an anti-gentile, and therefore a revolutionary force which broke the chains of the gentile forms of government and social control hampering the further development of the productive forces and of culture. By that time the gentile system had lost its former function of collective de-

fence of the members of the gens against a hostile natural environment. Property differentiation and the social antagonisms it gave rise to led to its disruption and its division into an elite that usurped social privileges, and a mass of ordinary gentiles who suffered from discrimination.

In these changed social conditions, the gentile system lost its vitality. '... It was powerless to check or allay even the most distressing evils that were arising under its very eyes,' noted Engels. However, insofar as it 'could not come to the assistance of the exploited people, they could look only to the rising state'.<sup>1</sup> The working people of ancient civilisations found themselves, so to speak, between the devil and the deep. On the one hand they were threatened with the arbitrary rule of a tribal elite that had separated off from its fellows, while on the other they faced the private-property phenomenon of money-lending, which took place outside the framework of the gens. The power of authority and the power of wealth, the tribal aristocracy and the *nouveaux riches*—the money-lenders—together marked out the channel of social development during the concluding stages of the primitive-communal formation. In these conditions, the emergent state became the 'binding force of civilised society'. It replaced the now defunct bonds of kinship, which had been narrowly local by their nature. With the help of the state, owners of the means of production and non-owners are integrated into one socio-economic system and the inevitable competition among the property-owners themselves is regulated.

Another aspect of the dialectic of the genesis of the state is that, in contrast to the genesis of private property, it is the power-regulatory relations between individuals and between social groups, which appear

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 328.

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 280.

at the 'surface' of public life. This is explained in materialistic terms by the increasing need to ensure public control over the activity of those engaged in the process of production. At the same time, while being externally volitional and addressed directly to individuals, these state-legal norms were already in ancient times, as Engels emphasised, ultimately conditioned by the relations of men to nature and the means of production.

Engels views the process of the emergence of public power, directed against the mass of the population, as a form of the consolidation of the privileges of certain social groups, of the exploiter class. From this it follows that the state emerges as an organisation of property owners directed against those who own no property, as an organisation for the defence of the privileges of the former against potential and actual claims by the latter.

This interpretation of the essence of the state makes it possible to produce an argued criticism of the theories of those bourgeois scholars who speak of the separation of state-power relations from those of private property: the theories of 'managerism', of a 'managerial revolution', etc. This is all the more important as the myth of the 'freedom' of state power vis-à-vis private property in the capitalist world has the force of prejudice in bourgeois sociology.

The problem of state power examined by Engels remains relevant to this day, particularly for a critique of bourgeois sociological theories. For example, the French lawyer Roger Pinto distinguishes between the concept of a political society and the state, and proclaims the first to be an attribute of any social community 'from tribes to empires, from theocracies to modern states', while the emergence of the state he identifies with the creation of the bourgeois political superstructure in Western Europe between the 14th

and 16th centuries.<sup>1</sup> Not infrequently, bourgeois sociologists make a superficial comparison between power and the 'control panel' of the given social system, and the influence of this power upon society is seen by them as 'relations of command'. Both these views ignore the class essence of the state as the opposite of the social self-government of gentile society.

Even those scholars who base themselves upon the class essence of the state are led, by the complexity of its genesis, to elaborate various points of view. The debate centres on the question of the temporal correlation of the processes involved in the emergence of classes and the emergence of the state. Some of the researchers studying this question are of the opinion that the state arose first, and then classes emerged. Others believe that classes preceded the state, while still others point out that initially these institutionalised forms were not differentiated within the framework of the class state.

The theoretical work done by Engels is of considerable help in elucidating this particular problem. Unlike Morgan, Engels saw the class nature of the state as a form of the *modus operandi* of antagonistic society, and he showed that in terms of general world history, the emergence of classes is simultaneous with that of the state.

To this day the debate continues on the essence of the military democracy and its relationship to eastern despotism. This also raises the broader question of the various ways in which the state emerges, a question examined by Engels in his *Anti-Dühring* and *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*. In the preface to the second edition of *Anti-Dühring* (1885), Engels wrote that he would have liked to elucidate more precisely the section on ancient history,

<sup>1</sup> Roger Pinto, Madeleine Grawitz, *Méthodes des sciences sociales*, t. 1, Précis Daloz, Paris, 1964, pp. 136, 150.

but that the publication of *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* freed him from such a necessity. This statement is incorrectly understood by some modern scholars to mean Engels' virtual rejection of the conclusions he came to in his *Anti-Dühring* on the basis of material on the ancient East.

Engels saw the military democracy as a form of the transition from the gentile organisation of public self-government to state power, a transition taking place in the typical conditions of military operations undertaken as a particular means of securing basic necessities for whole peoples at the stage of barbarism. A totally opposite form of the emergence of the functions and apparatus of state power could have been the hypertrophied intensification of executive power on the basis of the common economic requirements of a large number of communities in specific ecological conditions which demanded regular irrigation or other forms of centralised activity by large numbers of people. Placing, as Morgan had done, the emphasis on military democracy, Engels saw it as the dialectical opposite of eastern despotism, which he analysed in his *Anti-Dühring*. It is for this reason that in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* Engels cites, alongside the rise of the Athenian and Roman states, based on military leadership, another variant of the formation of the state—the gradual rise of public authority out of and side by side with the original constitutions of the Marks, village, manors and towns,<sup>1</sup> which is not directly linked to taking war prisoners and military conquests. In this book Engels looks at the various ways in which the state emerges from the point of view of the relative importance of internal and external factors, and not from the point of view of economico-organisational or military-organisational tasks, as he did in *Anti-Dühring*.

<sup>1</sup> F. Engels, op. cit., p. 265.

Characteristic features of the dialectic of the emergence of the state can be identified in the superstructure of newly-independent African states.

The national-liberation struggle swept away the fiscal-repressive apparatus of colonial administration, which was replaced by a new type of superstructure whose nature was determined by social-socialist or capitalist-orientation of the newly-independent countries. These countries, whichever their orientation, must take into account the local conditions. Colonialism had preserved (albeit in a radically distorted form) the traditional gentile-tribal system of social regulation of the behaviour of various sex-age groups, a system which had sunk into age-old lethargy and which needed either to be aroused or removed.

In capitalist-orientated newly-independent countries, the process of 'adapting' the lower links in the superstructure to the pro-bourgeois model of the state as formulated 'in the upper circles' objectively involves the forcible destruction of all vestiges of the gentile system. As for socialist-orientated African states, the idea of Morgan of the future return of mankind, within the framework of a 'higher social order', to a specific form of the 'freedom, equality and brotherhood of the ancient gentes', albeit expressed in an abstract-naïve form, is of increasing relevance. This idea, essentially compatible with the whole of Marxist doctrine, drew the close attention of Marx and Engels. Today we can see in this idea a spontaneous approach, not perceived by Morgan himself, to the idea of 'straightening out' the historical trajectory of the development of nations who have preserved the traditional gentile-tribal and communal forms of social life. Morgan himself, as a result of his adherence to the evolutionist principle of a smooth, harmonious, gradual and consistent sequence of historically inevitable stages, did not formulate such an approach, although all the prerequisites for it exist in his work.

Morgan, it is true, conceived of this higher social order in an extremely abstract form (democracy in government, brotherhood in social relations, equality in rights, universal education), as an expression of his negative attitude to bourgeois civilisation, which (and Marx especially underlines this point in his notes on Morgan's book) contains all the elements of its own destruction. Thus the epistemological basis of the description of the future social order was, for Morgan, a comparison with gentile society.

### The Class Essence of State Power

In *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, Engels provided a convincing substantiation of his thesis on the material, internally conditioned process of the emergence of the state. As a result of the development of the productive forces of mankind, the gentile-tribal production relations, which became too narrow for these forces and began to impede them were replaced by a society of class antagonisms and political coercion. Summarising the three variants of the emergence of the state among the ancient Greeks, Romans and Germans, Engels wrote in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*: 'The state is, therefore, by no means a power forced on society from without; just as little is it "the reality of the ethical idea", "the image and reality of reason", as Hegel maintains. Rather it is a product of society at a certain stage of development; it is the admission that this society has become entangled in an insoluble contradiction with itself, that it has split into irreconcilable antagonisms which it is powerless to dispel. But in order that these antagonisms, classes with conflicting economic interests, might not consume themselves and society in fruitless struggle, it became necessary to have

a power seemingly standing above society that would alleviate the conflict and keep it within the bounds of "order"; and this power, arisen out of society but placing itself above it, and alienating itself more and more from it, is the state.'<sup>1</sup>

The essence of all variants of the exploiter state resides in the fact that 'it is, as a rule, the state of the most powerful, economically dominant class, which, through the medium of the state, becomes also the politically dominant class, and thus acquires new means of holding down and exploiting the oppressed class'.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, each new rung in the development of the productive forces and production relations, bringing with it a particular type of class antagonisms, determined a corresponding type of state. Thus, the state of antiquity was above all the state of the slave owners for the purpose of holding down the slaves, as the feudal state was the organ of the nobility for holding down the peasant serfs and bondsmen, and the modern representative state is an instrument of the exploitation of wage labour by capital.<sup>3</sup> It is not difficult to see that the historical types of the exploiter state correspond to the 'three great forms of servitude, characteristic of the three great epochs of civilisation':<sup>4</sup> slavery, feudalism and capitalism.

Finally, concluding *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, Engels underlines the historically transient nature of the state, showing that it has not existed from all eternity and that it will not continue to exist for ever, due to the approaching age of the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism and the development of socialist society towards communism. 'Along with them [classes—Ed.] the state will

<sup>1</sup> F. Engels, op. cit., pp. 326-27.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 328.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 332.

inevitably fall. Society, which will reorganise production on the basis of a free and equal association of the producers, will put the whole machinery of state where it will then belong: into the museum of antiquities, by the side of the spinning-wheel and the bronze axe.<sup>1</sup>

It is important to note that Lenin, who thought very highly of *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, considered it to be the most popular of Engels' works,<sup>2</sup> and himself relied heavily on Engels' interpretation of the origin and essence of the state. This is shown in Lenin's *The State and Revolution*, which was written in August, 1917, on the eve of the Great October Socialist Revolution.

'The state is a product and a manifestation of the irreconcilability of class antagonisms,' writes Lenin. It 'arises where, when and insofar as class antagonisms objectively cannot be reconciled'.<sup>3</sup> He sees Engels' achievement as being the development by Engels in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* of the concept of that force which 'is called the state, a power which arose from society but places itself above it and alienates itself more and more from it'.<sup>4</sup>

Lenin sees not only a purely academic, purely theoretical aspect in this radically new approach to the question of the state. He specifically draws the reader's attention to the ideological and political conclusions which may and must be drawn by revolutionaries of different countries when studying what might appear to be a subject so far removed from the modern world as *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*. Lenin skilfully reveals the link between

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 330.

<sup>2</sup> See V. I. Lenin, 'The State and Revolution', *Collected Works*, Vol. 25, p. 399.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 392.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 394.

this book and the most urgent problems of his day. 'Like all great revolutionary thinkers, Engels tries to draw the attention of the class-conscious workers to what prevailing philistinism regards as least worthy of attention, as the most habitual thing, hallowed by prejudices that are not only deep-rooted but, one might say, petrified. A standing army and police are the chief instruments of state power. But how can it be otherwise?'<sup>1</sup> asks the author of *The State and Revolution*.

Developing this idea further, Lenin praises the relevance of Engels' theoretical reflection of the urgent practical tasks of the world revolutionary process. 'In the above argument', he writes, 'Engels raises theoretically the very same question which every great revolution raises before us in practice, palpably and, what is more, on a scale of mass action, namely the question of the relationship between "special" bodies of armed men and the "self-acting armed organisation of the population". We shall see how this question is specially illustrated by the experience of the European and Russian revolutions.'<sup>2</sup>

At the same time Lenin, revealing extraordinary insight and looking into the future, offered a precise epistemological prognosis of already existing and possible future speculative distortions of the Marxist theory on the essence and historical destiny of the state in opportunist-revisionist and nihilist-anarchist conceptions.

Engels' elaboration of the Marxist theory of the origin and essence of the state, based on material drawn primarily from ancient history, could not but attract the close attention of Lenin on the eve of the victorious socialist revolution in Russia. It is equally clear that the ideas on the correlation of direct collec-

<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 395.

tive self-government and state power contained in Marx's notes on Morgan's *Ancient Society* and in Engels' book have not lost their relevance today. They are undoubtedly of particular interest for ideological workers in the revolutionary parties of socialist-orientated African countries, since in modern Africa both these essentially opposing systems of organising power—traditional gentile-tribal and communal self-government 'from below' and state-legal regulation 'from above'—still exist side by side. In such a situation, the creation, within the framework of a non-capitalist path of development, of a historically favourable opportunity to avoid the stage of the exploiter state as a machine for repressing the working people becomes a political task of enormous importance. The successful achievement of this task requires a class approach, combined with psychological flexibility in dealing with traditional institutions of direct (and essentially primitive) democracy which are understandable and familiar to the population and which have survived in primary social structures.

In the ideology of the African countries there still survives the *palabre*, a symbol of direct tribal democracy. The *palabre* is the custom of unhurried discussion by all concerned of their common affairs, and may end in the adoption of a unanimous decision. This practice, analogous to the most ancient popular assemblies of gentes and tribes, a practice which lingered on in the depths of traditional structures and ritual ceremonies under the colonial regime, received a 'second life' when these countries won independence. Attempts to interpret this practice as representing an indigenous form of primitive 'parliamentarianism', and to turn it into a pseudo-democratic means of manipulating the people 'from above' (on the model of the bourgeois representative system) have not, on the whole, been successful. On the contrary, in a number of socialist-orientated countries, the tradition of collective-demo-

cratic discussion of common affairs is being used to awaken the socio-class and political consciousness of the people, particularly the peasants. Thus in Ethiopia, for example, the *palabre* is seen as an important way of adopting decisions in primary collectives or in their ruling collegial organs. In Mozambique, the procedure of accepting candidate members and full members into the FRELIMO party at open general assemblies of all the inhabitants of the village or town district, or of all the workers at an enterprise, is also reminiscent of the traditional *palabre*, as are certain features of the work of local popular assemblies in Angola.

The strategy of deliberately 'adopting' collectivist-democratic customs, procedures and institutions that have been cleansed of the grime of centuries of oppression and exploitation, is intended to help the broad working population to become involved in the structure of the emerging revolutionary-democratic state. The opportunity to take an active part in new social relations leads the working people beyond the narrow confines of direct gentile-tribal intercourse, and this promotes the formation and expansion of their political views. Where this aim is either not pursued (in capitalist-orientated countries), or it is not properly solved for a considerable period of time, the psychological replacement for this (formerly) customary method of securing emotional expression and reassurance is found in religious belief, whose message of equality, brotherhood, mutual aid and concern for one's neighbour corresponds to the moral norms of tribal society.

## IX. THE FORMATION OF CLASS SOCIETY: THE FIRST SOCIAL REVOLUTION

### Contradictory Trends in the Formation of a Class Society

Engels views the problem of the unity and diversity of the transition from primitive communal to antagonistic class society in its historical dynamism. The causes of unevenness in the socio-economic development of primitive society are to be found in the uneven development of the productive forces and the division of social labour. At the border between lower and middle stages of barbarism, these two factors are determined primarily by ecological conditions.

When analysing the age of the intensive formation of classes, Engels noted the existence within this process of contradictory and inter-related trends. He clearly showed that the antagonistic class society takes shape in the forms of the slave-owning society and feudalism, and points to the fundamentally common basis of these two variants of the formation of classes. It is not only a question of which antagonistic formation is the result of the transition, but also a question of the actual correlation of the level of the productive forces and the nature of the production relations in a concrete historical society.

The two dialectically inter-related trends in the emergence of classes are that 'the distinction between rich and poor was added to that between freemen and slaves...'<sup>1</sup> In other words, surplus labour and surplus product can be alienated both from members of one's

own community or tribe (by the usurpation of the communal fund and collective works by the tribal elite) and from people belonging to other tribes.

There is also a manifest tendency for the social status of these groups to converge: the adoption of 'aliens' into one's own community and the enslavement of members of one's own community for debt and their sale abroad. This was the situation, for example, in ancient Greece just before the reform of Solon: 'They arose in two ways,'<sup>2</sup> wrote Engels about the relationships based on domination and subjection. First, they arose because the 'independence of social functions in relation to society increased with time until it developed into domination over society...'<sup>2</sup> This trend is often referred to in modern literature on the subject as proto-feudal. It reproduces the general characteristics of the social relations of feudalism, based on the exploitation and oppression of one's own people. This type of class formation initially existed in the civilisations of the ancient East, which were based upon the universal slavery of the direct producers, grouped together in monolithic communities.

Second, at the earlier stage of barbarism, members of other tribes who had either been captured or who had arrived in the community by some other means and who were then adopted into the community, brought their labour power into the 'common labour pool'. The simple increase of the number of those involved in the unified production process brought its benefit without the need for discrimination or oppression. This phenomenon was simply '*forcible incorporation in the conquerors' social organisation, with equal rights being granted. Here there is no use of the surplus labour of the captive, but only the common advantage*'

<sup>1</sup> F. Engels, *Anti-Dühring*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1978, p. 219.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 220.

<sup>1</sup> F. Engels, op. cit., p. 321.

derived from collaboration with him'.<sup>1</sup> Approximately at the middle stage of barbarism, the captive is turned into a simple subordinate engaged in subsidiary economic activities. Engels called this domestic, patriarchal slavery. It occurred, in addition to the ancient East, in Mycenaean Greece, Etruscan Italy, in the Slav world, in Africa south of the Sahara, and in other regions. It is only at the later stage of barbarism, with the dawn of the iron age, that slavery 'soon became the dominant form of production among all peoples who were developing beyond the old community'.<sup>2</sup>

The inter-relationship and mutual determination of the trends described above in the formation of classes is confirmed by contemporary historical material.

Firstly, neither of these trends is anywhere found completely free of an admixture of the other, opposing trend. In the ancient world of Greece and Rome, even in the period that marked the high-point of the slave-owning mode of production, the economic role of the labour of semi-dependent and free categories of the population was considerable. In medieval feudal Europe, forms of exploitation, close to slavery, of groups of the population totally deprived of the means of production never fully disappeared.

Secondly, the predominance of one or other trend at a given stage in the development of a particular society inevitably led to a recrudescence of the opposite trend. With the collapse of the ancient world this is seen in the coloni and clients, and also emancipated slaves. In medieval Europe, the reappearance of slave-type forms of exploitation can be seen in the 'second edition' of serfdom in Germany, and in the sharp increase in corvée and the intensification of serfdom

<sup>1</sup> Georgi Plekhanov, *Selected Philosophical Works* in five volumes, Vol. III, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1976, p. 144.

<sup>2</sup> F. Engels, *Anti-Dühring*, p. 221.

when Russia emerged onto the international grain market.

Thirdly, both trends (the exploitation of one's own people, and the exploitation of 'aliens') have one common ancestor—the social forms of the period of transition from the primitive order to the class society. This period is characterised by the simultaneous co-existence of both forms of oppression, due to underdevelopment.

The society of ancient Egypt and other similar social organisations never made the transition to the slave-owning mode of production which found its classic expression in ancient Greece and Rome. They represented, in the conditions of the ancient East, the fullest possible development of the middle stage of barbarism. At the upper stage of barbarism, these societies appeared as historical 'fossils'. It should be pointed out that a trend towards slave-type forms of exploitation was clearly visible in pre-dynastic Egypt. It was at this stage that female slaves appeared; ancient portrayals of people pulling ploughs have been discovered, and a hieroglyph has been deciphered which refer to slaves as the 'living dead', etc. However, as a result of particular natural and historical factors, slavery in Egypt remained basically domestic and its potential possibilities were not realised.

Irrigation demanded the efforts of skilled men who had a vital interest in the result of labour, with centuries of accumulated experience behind them. Therefore the 'living implement'—the ancient slave—did not play a significant role in vitally important branches of the economic system. At the same time, the level of armaments was not yet sufficient to make possible the regular capture and exploitation of huge numbers of slaves.

The logic of the historical process is not to be identified with either one of these two trends either in space or time.

The ancient world did not emerge directly on the ruins of primitive-communal society. It relied for its emergence on the cultural achievements and social trends of the ancient East. In particular, the slave-owning system of Greece and Rome took to its classic form the tendency in ancient Eastern civilisations to deprive the mass of the population of their political rights. The 'gulf' between the despot and the mass of slaves deprived of all rights was 'filled' by the free population of the slave-owning state. This free population, in its turn, appeared simultaneously as the collective despot in relation to the slaves (and semi-freemen), and also as the object of economic exploitation and political manipulation in the hands of the elite ruling in its name.

When Morgan and Engels investigated this problem, it was still not known with any certainty that the 'Greek miracle' arose upon the foundation of centuries-old layers of transitional historical local forms which, in a number of their features and trends, were surprisingly similar to the classical forms of ancient Eastern civilisations. Engels frequently referred to the fact that the ancient social institutions of Greece and Rome with which he was acquainted were the result not only of contemporary social conditions, but also of 'the preceding history, of which we know nothing'.

Feudalism was neither a direct heir to the classical slave-owning system. It grew out of the transitional stage of development between the primitive and the class society, and out of the tendency in that transitional stage to use economic mechanisms of coercion to labour. Here, in contrast to ancient forms of exploitation, it was mainly the native population that was exploited. Feudalism did not develop overnight, but passed through several stages, each approaching more closely to the classical forms of feudal exploitation. The social classes of the ninth century had taken

shape not in the bog of a declining civilisation, but in the travail of a new,' commented Engels. 'Between the Roman *colonus* and the new serf there had been the free Frankish peasant.'<sup>1</sup>

In historical science prior to Marx prevailed an idealistic evaluation of slavery as 'a source of shame' and 'an error of history', and of feudalism as 'a thousand-year period of lethargy in Europe', 'a hiatus in history', 'a historical vacuum'. Engels refuted such views and showed, on the basis of concrete historical material, that these two stages in social development were objectively inevitable and dialectically inter-related.

Engels explicitly stated (and historical data confirms this) that precisely 'with slavery, which reached its fullest development in civilisation, came the first great cleavage of society into an exploiting and an exploited class... Slavery was the first form of exploitation, peculiar to the world of antiquity...' At the same time, however, he recognises the possibility of the completion of class formation directly in the form of feudalism, for example, in the history of the ancient Germans. Engels believed that an important material prerequisite for such a course of events was that the slave-owning mode of production was in a state of severe crisis, at least within the region. 'Slavery no longer paid, and so it died out',<sup>3</sup> latifundia and *angariae* lost their former advantage both over small-scale farming, which 'again became the only profitable form',<sup>4</sup> and over handicrafts, and therefore slaves were either emancipated or turned into coloni. Powerful barbarian military chiefs and, following their example, the church, began to take under their protec-

<sup>1</sup> F. Engels, 'The Origin of the Family...', p. 314.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 331-32.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 310.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 309.

tion the peasants who fled from the oppression of Roman officials and large landowners. A condition of such protection was that the peasants surrender their right of ownership of the land to their patron, military chief or church, in exchange for the usufruct for life.<sup>1</sup> Together with ordinary Germans who were compelled to seek protection and lost their allodiums, former citizens of the Roman provinces formed the skeleton of a social stratum which developed into the class of peasantry dependent on feudal lords. Thus proto-feudal production relations, fundamentally different from those of classic slavery, took shape and they corresponded more closely to the level, potential and development requirements of the productive forces of the new age.

The slave-owning mode of production, although it existed in its classic form only in the Mediterranean region, was by no means a specific local phenomenon, but a world-historical one. Its significance and influence on the course of the social development of mankind is global in scope. Even from a purely geographic point of view, it influenced all three continents which were the cradle of the civilisation of the Old World. The epicentre of the slave-owning mode of production was, of course, the Mediterranean, which Hegel termed the heart of the ancient world. Speaking of the significance of the Roman Empire, Engels wrote: 'The levelling plane of Roman world power had been passing for centuries over all the Mediterranean countries. Where the Greek language offered no resistance all national languages gave way to a corrupt Latin. There were no longer any distinctions of nationality, no more Gauls, Iberians, Ligurians, Noricans: all had become Romans. Roman administration and Roman law had everywhere dissolved the old bodies of *consanguinei* and thus crushed the last remnants

of local and national self-expression... This is what the Roman state with its world domination had brought things to: it had based its right to existence on the preservation of order in the interior and protection against the barbarians outside. But its order was worse than the worst disorder, and the barbarians, against whom the state pretended to protect its citizens, were hailed by them as saviours.'<sup>1</sup> These words by Engels about the world dominion of the Roman Empire are more than a mere metaphor. They reflect the influence of the slave-owning mode of production, which had here reached its apogee, not only on the extensive barbarian periphery, but on the entire course of the historical development of mankind at that time. Thus the denial of the historical inevitability of slavery as a special, objectively necessary mode of production which can sometimes be found in scholarly works is not justified. The view that the classic forms of the slave-owning mode of production are quite strictly localised is no less erroneous than attempts to find developed slavery in the history of every nation that has entered class society.

Within the slave-owning mode of production, civilisation embraced mainly handicrafts and the towns where they were sited. The feudal mode of production enabled civilisation to penetrate into agriculture, into the life of the villages that had replaced the former communities. If the early stages of feudalism were a period of stagnation, a period of decline of the towns and of urban handicrafts, nonetheless the achievements of the latter reached the most remote rural periphery. Thus the beginning of feudalism was not a hiatus in history, but one of the interruptions in its gradual development within the framework of the former mode of production.

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 310.

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., pp. 307-08.

### The First Social Revolution: Essence and Forms

The emergence of an antagonistic class society is an area of investigation in which the difference between the evolutionist Morgan and the revolutionary Engels becomes particularly evident, despite the great similarity in the material on ancient Greek and Roman history used by both authors. Engels showed that world history is characterised by interruptions in gradual development, leaps or social revolutions, and he also underlined the role played by force as 'the midwife of history' destroying obsolete social relations and institutions. Speaking of social violence, Engels did not identify this with just one of its forms—armed suppression. His theory of the origin of private property and the state as dialectically related aspects of the revolutionary transition from primitive communal to antagonistic class society proved to be far superior to Rousseau's idea of a social contract, or Dühring's absolutisation of armed force.

The object of the social struggle which first began in the ancient world were the traditions of collective labour, equal distribution and the democratic resolution of common affairs, all characteristic of the primitive-communal society. Vestiges of these traditions served during the whole period of the formation of classes, and even in class society, as a means of uniting the ordinary people in their resistance to any intensification of exploitation. Engels refers to this fact several times in his book. At the same time, however, the old tribal elite, and trading and money-lending elements which had either emerged from this elite or co-operated with it, strove to retain power and the wealth and privileges that went with it. In so doing they usually referred to the ties of kinship and the will of the tribal deities. If they felt it necessary, they also used public pressure (including, most probably, armed

force) against the wilfully disobedient and poor but recalcitrant debtors.

In the struggle between social strata and groups, the economic exploitation and political oppression of man by man first crystallised into openly class institutions which threw off the traditions of the primitive-communal society within which they had been gradually taking shape.

Engels, who had made a special study of the emergence of class society and the state in the ancient world, views this process as a social revolution. This revolution takes place in several stages, in the course of which a radical change occurs in the property relations and organisational forms of social life, which become the opposite of what they had been previously. Solon, writes Engels, 'started the series of so-called political revolutions by an encroachment on property. All revolutions until now have been revolutions for the protection of one kind of property against another kind of property. They cannot protect one kind without violating another. In the Great French Revolution feudal property was sacrificed in order to save bourgeois property; in Solon's revolution, creditors' property had to suffer for the benefit of debtors' property. The debts were simply annulled'.<sup>1</sup>

The so-called religious revolution of Muhammed was also very reminiscent of the reforms of Solon. It made it possible to achieve a compromise among the Arabs who adopted Islam by prohibiting usury (*Riba*), by making acts of charity by the rich to the poor mandatory (*Zakyat*), condemning luxury, etc. As a result, the reforms of Muhammed transferred the social antagonisms which had developed in Arabia (among the Bedouin tribes, in the towns based on trade and handicrafts, and in the oasis-based farming communities) outside, onto the non-Arab, non-Muslim peoples who,

<sup>1</sup> F. Engels, 'The Origin of the Family...', p. 280.

for several centuries, became the object of military, trade, and then ideological expansion on the part of the Arab-Islamic civilisation.

A political revolution at the borderline between primitive-communal and antagonistic-class society requires the presence of two mutually exclusive but temporarily co-existing forms of property—social property, genetically linked to the primitive-communal order, and private property, freed from kinship ties, and thus easily alienated. One or other social group, by virtue of its economic interests, is based on and clings to one of these forms of property. Among the elite of a given society, this contradiction manifests itself in the form of rivalry in the struggle for power between opposing groups: the tribal elite, which has enslaved its own people, and the supporters of democracy, who are seeking to shift the focus of social contradictions outside the circle of its own people onto captive slaves or whole peoples who have become the object of economic expansion. In ancient Greece, it is the first aspect of this social drama which dominates, while in ancient Rome it is the second.

It is also worth noting that Engels uses both the term 'reform' and the term 'revolution' with regard to Solon's activity. The term 'the reform of Solon' is the accepted one in bourgeois historiography, which avoids the concept of revolution, seeing revolution as an anomaly in social development, a deviation from the normal course of history. As far as is known, Solon's action took the form of promulgating a new law—a reform. This new law was adopted against the background of popular ferment during a complex and tense struggle among the privileged strata. However, in its content, in a radical intervention into property relations, in its sharp opposition of one section of the population to the other, it was a revolution. Naturally Engels, when referring to the event, calls it a reform (using the then accepted terminology), but when

assessing it, describes it as a 'revolution'.

This revolution was a slave-owning revolution. It occurred in a society standing on the threshold of class antagonisms. By this time, the enslavement of fellow-Greeks was proceeding apace, while, at the same time, strenuous efforts were being made to contrast the 'single' Greek nation against the barbarian tribes and alliances that surrounded it. The economic possibility of making wide use of surplus labour was realised in the exploitation and oppression of non-Greeks. 'Instead of exploiting their own fellow-citizens in the old brutal manner,' writes Engels, summing up the economic reasons for Solon's activity and the social forces which supported him, 'the Athenians now exploited mainly the slaves and non-Athenian clients.'<sup>1</sup> This led to a corresponding revolution in social relations. 'The class antagonism on which the social and political institutions rested was no longer that between the nobles and the common people, but that between slaves and freemen, dependents and citizens.'<sup>2</sup>

This revolution in property relations affected all other social ties. One can imagine the enthusiasm of the simple people when they saw the mortgage posts being removed from their fields, the debts of the artisans and other working people being annulled, the redemption of debtors sold into slavery by their creditors, and the return of those who had fled their country to escape the money-lenders. A bitter social struggle ensued. Large landowners and money-lenders who had suffered material loss as a result of Solon's reform, made several attempts to mount a counter-attack and to restore the former order of things, so advantageous to them. The conflict over this law continued for another eighty-five years, and another revolutionary reform was necessary in order to consolidate it. A law on the territorial self-government of the popula-

<sup>1</sup> F. Engels, 'The Origin of the Family...', p. 282.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 284.

tion was introduced with the aim of undermining the might of the elite, who drew their strength from kinship ties. The whole of Attica was divided into one hundred self-governing townships or demes, the citizens of which elected from among their own number an official head, a treasurer, thirty judges and also priests to serve in the temple. And once again we find that, in describing this law whose adoption is linked to the name of Cleisthenes, Engels uses the term 'revolution'. 'The nobility,' he writes, 'tried to regain its former privileges and for a short time recovered its supremacy, until the revolution of Cleisthenes (509 B.C.) brought about its final downfall; and with them fell the last remnants of the gentile constitution.'<sup>1</sup>

As for the emergence of the class society and the state in ancient Rome, the measures adopted by Servius Tullius were in many respects similar to those of Solon. While refraining from commenting on the circumstances and details of this process due to the unreliability of information, Engels nonetheless quite clearly defines it as a 'revolution that put an end to the old gentile constitution', to which he added that 'its causes lay in the conflicts between the plebs and the *populus*'.<sup>2</sup>

The Roman world found itself in an impasse as a result of the declining economic value of slave labour, and the profound, centuries-old revulsion against physical labour felt among the free citizens. 'Only a complete revolution could be of help here,'<sup>3</sup> wrote Engels. Marx and Engels viewed the anti-slave-owning revolution as a factor of world-historical importance. However, they did not identify such a revolution with slave rebellions for their liberation, with 'slave revolution'. Moreover, Engels wrote that the ancient world

knew of no victorious slave rebellions.<sup>1</sup>

Engels underlined the fact that the crisis of imperial Rome could not be resolved by internal forces, and also pointed to the institutions of coloni and clients as unusual for the slave-owning mode of production. He linked the overthrow of the slave-owning system to regional contacts which involved peoples whose mode of production was directly opposed to that of slavery, or who at least had the beginnings of such a mode of production. The anti-slave-owning revolution paved the way in history 'through the forcible subjection of the deteriorating communities by other, stronger ones (Greece by Macedonia and later Rome). As long as these themselves have slavery as their foundation, there is merely a shifting of the centre and a repetition of the process on a higher plane until (Rome) finally a people conquers that replaces slavery by another form of production'.<sup>2</sup>

The depth and range of the social revolution leading to the emergence of antagonistic-class social relations can be measured by comparing the history of the civilisations of the ancient East and the ancient Mediterranean, although in the latter this pattern—from Crete to Rome—is uneven. In those places where the revolution remained at its early, initial stages, it was ambivalent and incomplete. Traditional social institutions and communal practices continued to exist alongside the new forms, and historical movement was abruptly slowed down and diverted from its main course. Among some peoples primitive-communal relations disintegrated only very slowly.

The primary social revolution (in his book Engels does not refer to this by a special term, but it is precisely this primary social revolution which is one of the most important objects of his investigation) developed

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 282.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 292.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 310.

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 315.

<sup>2</sup> F. Engels, *Anti-Dühring*, p. 422.

within the productive forces as a neolithic-cum-metalurgical revolution, based on the use of draught animals, and the exploitation of such natural energy sources as water, wind, etc. It 'irrupted' into social life as it were 'from below', from the base. Tribal relations disintegrated, preparing, with the help of political activity and related institutions, the social ground for property inequality within and outside the family. However, this social revolution was then usually consolidated by means of legislation, and was completed by the formation of a political superstructure which 'heads' social life and is crowned by the state.

The first sphere in which the contradiction between the new technological structure of the productive forces and the former production relations became apparent was the transitional patriarchal family. However, at this level of development of the productive forces, the most radical solution of the contradictions between them and the production relations impeding their development was private ownership of the means of production, which arose within the separate economies of the patriarchal family. However, as soon as it appeared, private property so intensified the social antagonisms that had arisen during the transitional period that it rendered the creation of the state an urgent necessity. The state, emerging as a machine of oppression, rested on the discharge of a number of functions which derive 'from the nature of all communities'.<sup>1</sup> The regulation of the social production of the means of subsistence and of the production of man himself began, in these new conditions, with the first social revolution in human history.

Basing himself on facts taken from the age of the formation of antagonistic-class society, Engels adduced further arguments to support Marx's theory, and creatively developed it. He showed that, with the move-

ment of ancient history fundamentally determined 'from below' by the productive forces and production relations, the basic question involved in the first social revolution was already the question of power. Only the replacement of the tribal elite, who had acquired vast wealth and abused their privileges, by the Athenian slave-owning democracy, by the Roman republic and empire, and finally, by the barbarian proto-feudal kingdoms of the Germans, opened the way for historical progress.

Within the framework of the first social revolution, one of the two dialectically opposed trends of development came to predominate. From the point of view of its socio-economic prerequisites, the replacement of the primitive-communal order by the antagonistic-class society was internally contradictory. The object of exploitation could be both one's own impoverished people, who had become dependent on their fellow tribesmen and also 'aliens' who had been enslaved as a result of capture in war or by other means. Furthermore, the range of the means of exploitation had changed considerably as a result of the correlation of the alienation of surplus labour (in the form of collective community work, military tribal detachments and slave labour) and the alienation of the surplus product (the communal insurance fund, which was often misappropriated by piracy, military seizures, war reparations and tribute). The nature of the revolution was also determined by the fact that the tribal elite, trading and money-lending circles, the priesthood and the military leaders functioned as the subject of the new exploitation.

Possibly it was Engels' interest in the ancient East prior to his acquaintance with Morgan's book, which led him to concentrate particularly on identifying that 'unit' of society within which the radical change in social relations caused by the development of the productive forces actually took place. In the ancient

<sup>1</sup> Cf. K. Marx, *Capital*, Vol. III, p. 384.

East, the basis of this development was the organisation of centralised social labour, primarily in irrigation (called by economists the effect of scale). In the Mediterranean, increase in labour productivity was ensured mainly by the improvement of the implements of labour and by an intensification of trading links, that is, the main factor was the diversity of conditions and of types of production activity. Therefore, in the civilisations of the ancient East, tribal relations, disturbed but not destroyed, were quite literally 'compressed' into the foundation of the socio-economic structures and crushed by the weight of the despotic superstructure above them. In the ancient Mediterranean, the contradiction between gentile-tribal relations and the development of the productive forces which they increasingly restricted was not only not 'immured', buried, enclosed in the foundation of the new forms of the state, but, on the contrary, was swept up onto the surface, sharply outlined against the traditions of primitive democracy. Clearly, therefore, it is not surprising that the author of *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* uses the term 'revolution' for the first time in relation to the sphere of family relations, to the patriarchal family. Where this revolution in tribal and family relations did not occur or was incomplete, gentile-tribal and communal-caste relations ossified in their initial primitive form. Over the course of thousands of years, these relations formed, in the words of Engels, invariable basis of ancient Eastern civilisations. It could not be shaken even by the most ruthless despotism, nor by the storms in the sphere of politics, nor by the cataclysms like the destructive invasions of nomads. Thus the development of ancient Eastern societies towards class antagonisms stagnated.

Nonetheless, not only in its ancient eastern, but even in its Greco-Roman and German-Barbaric variants the first social revolution was an extremely long drawn-out process.

When investigating the replacement of the primitive-communal order by antagonistic class society, Engels based himself on a dialectic-materialist evaluation of the regular stages of social development, and of the dependence of this transition on the development of the productive forces and production relations of society. For Morgan, the driving force behind historical development was the accumulation of ideas and technological experience, finding their most concentrated expression in the superstructure. Engels revealed the economic roots of social changes in the basis—the material life of society. Morgan was prompted by the intuition of a researcher. Engels purposefully applied the theory of socio-economic formations elaborated by Marx and himself and made a class analysis of social changes. Therefore there is every reason to affirm that Engels not only interpreted Morgan's work from a dialectical-materialist viewpoint and developed his hypothesis. He also, on the basis of the material systematised and generalised by Morgan, and also on the basis of the research he and Marx had conducted on this question, created a genuinely scientific theory of the revolutionary transition from the primitive-communal order to antagonistic class society.

## CONCLUSION

The book *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* provides a reasoned and convincing confirmation of the basic tenets of the dialectical materialism as applied to the pre-capitalist stage of human history. Engels was the first to show that ancient society was governed by the same laws of development as the other formations preceding communism. In particular, ancient history and pre-bourgeois social structures are characterised by sharp contradictions between the productive forces and production relations, and a struggle between strata and groups whose fundamental material interests come into conflict. Finally, social revolution became the means of replacing the primitive socio-economic formation with one or other form of antagonistic-class society: the slave-owning (Greeks, Romans) or the feudal (the Germans).

Modern Marxist historical science is developing along the lines mapped out by Engels, basing itself upon his creative legacy in the field of ancient history, and referring to his work at turning points in its development caused by the appearance of new methods of research. The material now possessed by historians confirms the basic theory developed by the founders of Marxism—concerning the essence of primitive society and the laws of its development towards antagonistic class formations. This theory makes it possible to elaborate in greater detail and specify the nature of the operation of the general laws of history in relation to specific ages, cultures and peoples.

In this connection the theoretical legacy of Engels retains its full relevance, while his book *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* serves as a classic example of a genuinely dialectic analysis of the major problems of ancient history.

In addition to publishing the works of Marx, Engels and Lenin, Progress Publishers also issues pamphlets on individual works of Marxism-Leninism for those studying Marxist-Leninist theory.

In the present pamphlet, the Soviet scholar Igor Andreyev examines some of the key questions discussed in Engels' *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*. He concentrates in particular on the stages in the development of primitive society and the transition to antagonistic class formations, on the historical evolution of marriage and family relations, on the origin of private property and the state. The reader will also touch briefly upon modern investigation into the issues raised by Engels.

